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'R. L. S. AND HIS SINE QUA NON.'

A FOURTH FLASHLIGHT FROM SKERRYVORE.

SEVERAL days passed before my next summons to Skerryvore. Then came a joy that was worth waiting for. R. L. S. was at last satisfied!

For the first time he had fulfilled his wife's prophecy: the version book was mislaid.

'I am sorry,' he said, 'because I meant to have read it aloud to you. I went through it yesterday with Henley, and we both felt that the description rang true. The garden we saw was both characteristic and charming; only, if I may be allowed to express my personal views, it was far too damp to be a fitting home for you. You are probably much better off, so far as health is concerned, here in Bournemouth. So am I. Otherwise I should like to pay that garden a long visit. In the description I found only one word to change, and one comma that ought to have been a semi-colon.'

As, luckily, the rough copy was with me, he made these corrections there and then, giving me his reason as he did so: that one word had, to his sensitive ear, broken the rhythm of a sentence otherwise neatly balanced. Later on he gave me various little exercises, all of great value in the formation of style; and as we went along he was always pointing out landmarks that would, if I should ever find myself alone, so to speak, in a featureless desert of words, help me to take my bearings and get back home to the heart of things.

It may be worth while perhaps, in view of the many questions that have been put to me during the last thirty years or more, to try and set down a few of the rules given for my own guidance.

(1) 'Never let a long sentence get out of hand. If it begins

to run loose, tie it in a knot with a good strong inversion : swing it round on a pivot. For this sort of thing our friend Hume is the finest model you can study. It will be a great help too, to read as many well-written French books as you can get hold of. The French are masters in the art of inversion and delicate balance.'

This instruction was given as the sequel to a lesson of which a brief outline may be the best illustration of his meaning. The criticism on my work comes back to me exactly in the tone in which it was uttered, though by no effort of will can I recall the exact nature of the exercise that gave rise to it. All I remember is that, after dealing as best I could with some historical event which had been described to me overnight, I became stupid with sleep, and finished up with some such feeble sentence as this :

'A monument was erected on the spot in the reign of Charles the Second.'

'Charles Second!' exclaimed R. L. S. in scathing scorn. 'What on earth has he to do with it? And what a miserable word to end upon! Oh, drag him in by all means, if you want to; but the monument, not that wretched man, is the word for emphasis. How about this?

"His action was not forgotten. Later on, in the reign of Charles II, a site in Westminster Abbey was chosen by his grateful countrymen, who there, as his memorial, reared over him a marble monument."

Anyone to whom his voice was familiar will hear the ringing r's and understand how the lesson was dramatically driven in with every word.

'Miserable woman!' it seemed to shout. 'How dare you so misuse our glorious language?'

And to this day, whenever the echo comes hurtling back, a sentence, if not a whole paragraph, generally has to be re-modelled in obedience to his voice.

(2) '*Don't work a simile backwards.*'

The fault which called forth this counsel must be explained. Having been ordered to write for him a descriptive account of the battle of Bosworth, I was so far left to myself as to say: 'The combatants entered the lists.'

'Halt!' cried a stern voice. 'Don't you see for yourself how stupid that is? You are using to describe a real battle an expression that had its origin in a sham fight. Never state a

thing backwards like that. It is only in a tournament that "combatants enter the lists." The expression is ridiculous. What have lists to do with it, anyway? Write out that sentence again, please, and let me see that you clearly understand where the fault lies.'

(3) '*Don't bother your head about English Grammar. It's a poor study at best.*'

I had been, he pronounced, fairly grounded in Latin and French; both, he said, would be far more useful in the formation of style.

(4) '*Read every sentence aloud to yourself.*' 'If the sense is not limpidly clear, make it so before you pass on. If needs be write it over and over again, but nothing with which your own ear is dissatisfied must ever be allowed to stand.'

(5) 'In dialogue,' he used to say, '*Never let the vulgar craze for realistic writing run away with you.* Any fool can take down commonplace talk verbatim. The highest art demands that while you are true to the spirit of a speaker, you should sift his language in your own mind before committing it to paper. Then bring the speech out as forcibly as it went in; but, so far as your education permits, put it in better form.'

Perhaps the most illuminating task he ever set me to do was in connexion with the book he was then at work upon, the 'Life of Professor Fleeming Jenkin.' It is not at hand for reference; but there was a passage in it which he pronounced to be incomparably the hardest he had ever been called upon to write. All I can be sure of is that it concerned an anecdote of someone (Mrs. Jenkin's mother, I believe) who had been the pupil of Pasta.

The literary crux was this: how was the anecdote about two women to be told without any confusion of the words *she* and *her*? The nominative that belonged by right to one had a maddening trick of jumping over to the other. No sooner was it retrieved and brought back into place than the accusative, with a leap, followed suit.

For some time before I came in for my lesson one morning, R. L. S. and Lloyd Osbourne (a delightful feature of Skerryvore who, though still but a lad then, was as keen as mustard, and highly ingenious in the pursuit of style) had been working independently upon this problem. My entrance was greeted with a shout—both had just won through! Loud and long was their jubilation.

Straightway a decree went forth that, as it was first-rate practice

and incidentally really fine sport, I too was to have my innings. But, as another exercise had to be corrected there and then, the anecdote was to be tackled at home. All such wretched make-shifts as 'the former' and 'the latter' were banned; the difficulty was to be, not shirked, but overcome in fair fight.

'And if you succeed in telling that story in faultless English,' said R. L. S. after pointing out the pitfalls that encompassed me, 'you will go up pegs and pegs in my estimation, and I will pronounce you fit to run alone!'

It cost me hours of hard, close thinking before the clue to the maze became clear to me. But all the time that bribe of 'pegs and pegs' hung before me, urging me on as a carrot before his nose might urge a tired donkey—and at last my literary conscience not only ceased to goad me to fresh exertions, but vigorously patted me on the back.

R. L. S. was always one to purr with all his might when he was pleased. When he could honestly praise a piece of work he did it dramatically, and at once made an epoch in life.

'If the post had not gone,' he said, 'I would, as a prize for this feat, have substituted your version for my own.'

Though as a critic absolutely merciless, nobody in the world rewarded more lavishly or with keener pleasure what he called 'a good, honest piece of work.'

He made you feel that a single word of praise from his lips was worth any toil you could be called upon to endure; and his happy excitement over every step of advance in the right direction was like that of a proud young father teaching his first baby to walk.

Long before I could walk, even with halting steps—almost, in fact, from the outset of my training—I found that, in the matter of spelling, it was needful to hold my own.

On this point R. L. S. held theories, to say the least of it, unusual.

For instance he persisted, despite remonstrances, that sphinx was to be spelt S P H Y N X E; and when, waxing bolder as time went on, I was able, after diligent search to bring up four huge and trustworthy dictionaries in support of my own counter-assertion, he brushed them airily aside, and retorted in his brilliant, irresponsible fashion:

'Well! Perhaps you *have* justified yourself in the eyes of lexicographers, from Johnson downwards, but what is that to me? I maintain against all comers that S P H Y N X E is a

far better word than sphinx ; and therefore, henceforth and for ever, S P H Y N X E it shall be ! '

One day soon after this, we had not been working long when some other hot dispute of the same nature arose.

That very morning when I arrived for my lesson I had found him bathing his soul in a volume of 'Murray's Dictionary,' in which on the authority of R. L. Stevenson, the name of some rare American plant was given. As a matter of fact the *Sine qua non*, from whom (in Silverado-squatter days) he had first heard the name, stoutly maintained that it was incorrectly spelt.

'Right or wrong,' retorted this irrepressible being, 'my spelling is, from this day forth, classical !'

Then, turning upon his captious pupil, still disposed to crow over her recent victory, he added majestically : 'And from this moment, Madam, in the matter of spelling I brook no contradiction. A classic writer can *and will* spell as he pleases. And, mark my words, the spelling adopted by him becomes *ipso facto* the only correct form. This dictionary is the finest in the world ; it has made me not only immortal but infallible into the bargain. Defy me again at your peril !'

That morning, though he would never have owned it, he was far from well : extravagant moods like this often indicated 'temperature.'

Whether on account of this, or because of his eager delight in his new toy—the dictionary—we did not get through much work. We just talked and talked about books and writers. How we came to Charles Reade I forget ; but, as the outcome of something he was explaining, I was ordered to make a close study of 'Griffith Gaunt.' 'Have you got it at home ?' he asked. We had not.

'Well, wait a minute then ; I must run up and get it for you.'

'But before I go,' he added, 'you shall have the honour of your life. You shall nurse my baby till I come back.'

With all the solemnity of a parent at the Font, he laid the dictionary in my arms, and vanished. Imagine the horror of the situation !

I knew, though mercifully he never suspected this, that both his doctor and the *Sine qua non* were relying upon me not only to distract his mind from more arduous work by giving whole-hearted attention to his instruction ; but also, and this was of

vital importance, to keep him quiet by the fire in an even temperature.

And lo ! before I could look round, he was off like a rocket through the cold passage to a fireless room upstairs.

What could be done ? At the risk of his fierce displeasure, I dumped the dictionary down on his chair, and flew to the *Sine qua non* ; busy at that moment, as it chanced, in the next room.

'He has dashed upstairs for a book,' I said. 'What can be done ? He is over-excited, I think, too, about the work. Hadn't I better fly home before he comes back ?'

'Certainly not,' she said with conviction. 'Just as he is, thin slippers and all, he would rush down the road and bring you back. To try and turn him when his mind is made up is pure waste of time. If he means you to have "Griffith Gaunt"—"Griffith Gaunt" you must have : he will never rest now till you have read it. Fly back, my dear, before he misses you, and wait for him as if nothing had happened. You must nurse the baby entrusted to your care !'

Her sad smile of infinite patience went to my heart.

When one thinks of it, at this distance of time, one realises more vividly even than one could at the moment the quiet heroism of her daily and hourly self-restraint. These erratic moods, in which all caution went to the winds, must often have tried her nerves almost to breaking point ; but I doubt if she ever allowed him to know what agony she had to live through. To the utmost of her power, she guarded him from every risk ; but when she saw that nothing would be gained by remonstrance, she quietly said her say, and then took refuge in silence. It is hard to imagine what the least opposition cost her : she could not bear to add even a feather's weight to the burden of his often infirmities.

When at last, having unearthed the book, he brought it back to the Blue Room, we solemnly exchanged 'babies' ; after which, brimming with his advance comments on the tale, I took my leave and went off with 'Griffith Gaunt.'

As I looked back from the door he was just taking another header into the dictionary. Absurd as his comments were, I believe his pleasure at finding his name enshrined there was perfectly genuine. He told me that, seriously, it was a recognition of his place in the world of letters that gladdened his heart. Blessings on the quotation-seeker whose discovery of the (mis-spelt) word called up that happy child-like smile and cheered him on one of the rare days

when a fleeting shadow of pain had over-clouded that 'glorious morning face.' To me it was always like a reflection of something brighter still, something which, on this 'dull side of Death,' rarely comes to view. But it was not till 'Underwoods,' his own gift, came into my possession, that I understood how his 'great task of happiness' was so splendidly fulfilled.

Taking into account all the odds against it, and then remembering the (almost) invariable radiance of his expression, one realises that the high courage to which every reader as well as every personal friend bears testimony, was not simply a matter of temperament. The R. L. S. who stands revealed to us in the Vailima Prayers, knocking at the door of Heaven to ask for what he was conscious of needing, was not the man one met every day at Skerryvore; his talk at times was what strait-laced folk might have condemned as flippant, but underneath it all there was a solid foundation of reverence for 'the wingy mysteries of the faith.' It behoved every Christian gentleman to bear himself nobly in the campaign of life; therefore, and not because he was the 'cheery optimist' so belauded in modern pulpits, he set himself to fight depression as a traitor to his own ideal of manhood.

After all, this ethereal being had behind him a grand stock of Covenanters, who had more insight than most modern psychologists into what he himself, in one of his individual sermons, described to me as 'the only thing that really matters.'

To return for a few moments before the Flashlight goes out to the subject of his genius as a teacher:

Sometimes even one word supplied by him would send the breath of life through a paralysed sentence. To have these wretched efforts suddenly transformed by an intellectual alms from his princely hand was to be spirited away into the living heart of fairyland, there to find oneself, to all intents and purposes, like an eager little dwarf in a crowd swung up on the shoulder of a giant, to view some gallant spectacle.

Surely also it savours of fairy lore that, as a sequel to this adventure, the giant should have kept in such close, friendly touch with the dwarf ever after, that, to speak still in a parable, the coign of vantage became her inalienable freehold, from which she has ever since peered out into the world of letters. This is what he charged her to do when his search for health sundered them by half the width of the world:

'I cannot,' he said, 'lay down the law to you any longer:

you must go your own way now. But seriously, I want you to make one firm resolution to-day, if you will, never to write even a trifling note without imagining first that I am just behind, reading it over your shoulder. That will keep you up to the mark. You might soon get regular work as a reviewer; you could master the trick and find much amusement and profit in it. But don't take up work of that kind. I never want you to eat the bitter bread of criticism. With quite a modest share of wit, it is easy to be hideously cruel: cruelty, if it is clever enough, pays well and is therefore a temptation to be shunned. You will try, won't you, not to forget all we have done together?'

That promise was not hard either to make or to keep.

There was a brief silence. Then the Master sprang up in his impetuous fashion.

Crossing the room with rapid strides he snatched from the back of a chair the little red shawl so often thrown across his shoulder. Transforming it by a touch into a helpless baby, he caught it to his heart and rocked it gently to and fro.

'Underneath . . .' he murmured softly to himself, 'Underneath . . . are the everlasting arms.'

This action, seen once more through the mist of years, strikes me as curiously symbolical.

That frail body of his harboured a soul very like St. Christopher's, a soul that now and then, at rare intervals, flashed out in a storm of longing to fling his infirmity to the winds and to shoulder the burden of some other weakling whose weariness of body or of mind was but a faint shadow of his own.

The little red shawl, the first thing that came to hand, was for the moment used, allegorically, to comfort the forlorn pupil.

'Hush!' sang the wordless lullaby. 'There is nothing in the dark corners to be afraid of. Though the whole world, even Skerryvore, being shaken to its foundations should pass away, the things that cannot be shaken will remain.'

A. A. B.

(*Their Gamekeeper*).

THE BALANCE OF BIRDS.

To take a fair-minded view of the gains and losses to our avifauna during the period since observation began is a matter of extreme difficulty, and one far from simplified by the well-meant propaganda of ardent Protectionists.

These over-zealous champions of our bird life paint nothing during the last hundred and fifty years but an orgy of destruction and the disappearance of one of our most valued species after another, till one is left with the impression that it is only a matter of time before birds will be as extinct in Britain as sabre-toothed tigers.

While no one feels more deeply than myself on the persecution of birds, especially by collectors, I do not believe it will ultimately help us not to regard all the facts fairly. To be of any real value a review of the subject should deal fully with both sides of the question from a less parochial standpoint, in fact almost from the ground where the naturalist's territory borders on the realm of economics.

The further we go back in ornithology the less sure can we be of the real abundance, or otherwise, of a given species at any time. 'Common' and 'rare' are purely comparative terms conveying often something different in meaning to each observer according to his powers and experience, while even the fact of a species holding a high place in folk-lore and popularity is no guarantee of its numbers.

This anybody can still verify for himself: for instance, in the Rhineland round Cologne, the cuckoo and robin enjoy precisely the same popularity as in England, yet I found robins during two years in perhaps the proportion of one to every fifty in the south of England, while the cuckoo was met with on only six occasions in three seasons, all on the right bank of the Rhine. Most people along the left bank would probably scarcely have heard these birds in a life-time spent in their own over-cultivated fields, and yet the cuckoo remains nominally well known, and the robin is termed a general favourite.

There is one other serious handicap—that while we know when a familiar bird has disappeared even long ago (as the crane), we have no means of ascertaining with such accuracy if a bird has colonised or increased until quite recently.

But making allowances for all this we can still arrive at some sort of a balance-sheet, and looking at the subject fairly it is difficult to say that our bird life is nowadays appreciably less rich or less varied than it has been.

A common failing of the bird-lover is to think, perhaps half-consciously, of the days before the Tudors as a kind of 'pre-war' state of things, when the land belonged to the birds and all were in a fixed and constant proportion to one another. It is hard for him to realise that bird life is eternally and necessarily in a state of flux, one species gradually going under and another taking its place. Thus the golden oriole is only a very scarce if regular visitor to us, and was so apparently in Henry VIII's reign. Dr. Turner notes that he has never seen it in England though often in Germany, which remains the state of things even yet. In England and some parts of Northern France you may watch a lifetime without seeing it, but about Cologne (where Turner watched the kestrels round the cathedral in 1544) I have seen or more often heard it in most localities during its very short summer stay. But there is good evidence that Giraldus Cambrensis saw it near Bangor in 1187, when it may have been a fairly scarce inhabitant of the great expanse of greenwood which sheltered Robin Hood. It is very unlikely, however, that the 'woodwele' which 'sang and wolde not cease,' in the ballad, was an oriole.

But whatever changes took place at that time, we can trace nothing certain in the status before the dawn of ornithology half lights up the final disappearance of cranes, to save which a special Act was passed under Henry VIII. There is no telling why they deserted us so utterly: if there was, it might also explain why the spoonbill vanished long before persecution became intolerable, or why the black terns left in a body when fens to their liking still remained, and exist even now.

Man is too apt to shoulder unnecessary responsibility for such losses, and to blame on the collectors or the drainage of the fens changes due to entirely different causes. Towns rise and fall with amazing suddenness and receive little pity; Winchelsea, we know, was deserted by the sea; the importance of Hastings was lost with Normandy; Venice and Lübeck were only leaders of the hundreds ruined by Christopher Columbus, while yet more cities have arisen to fill their places. It is the same with the birds; hawks and marsh birds give way to passerines and more adaptable species, but, as a whole, bird population has probably suffered as little as human from the new order of things.

In tracing the blacker side of the picture, the lost and half-lost birds, it is difficult not to feel that the collector—bogey and scape-goat of all interested parties—has been rather unjustly treated.

Our lost British nesting species number at most about thirteen.

Savi's warbler has certainly gone, but the last nest was discovered in 1856, only sixteen years after the species was first noticed in Britain, and in his edition of that very year Yarrell shows no suspicion even of any decrease. Obviously the persecution theory is scarcely tenable here; the bird probably vanished under the natural law that when any given species falls through some cause under a certain safety-line of numbers, it is in grave peril of extinction without the least human assistance. By this law the crane (with the help of the mediaeval caterer) and the spoonbill (Sir Thomas Browne's shovelard) had probably already been judged and found wanting, for by the time destructive fowling began they were extinct as breeding species. The avocet hung on longer, till about 1816, and is even now not beyond slight hope of re-establishment, for some visit us annually; besides the cause of the others it was coveted by Izaak Walton and Co. for their gentle pursuit.

The black-tailed godwit had the misfortune to be 'accounted the daintiest dish in England' which probably drove it below the margin of safety even more than the drainage of the fens.

The goshawk, often counted among the lost, was probably never indigenous.

Like the godwit, the ruff and reeve were too tasty to be spared, but fen drainage touched them more seriously, and well over a century ago Montagu prophesied that they 'would probably, as agriculture increased, be entirely driven from this island.' They remained long enough, however, for the collector's heavy hand to speed the departing guest.

Probably the comparative popularisation of the once deserted fens was, as much as drainage or active persecution, responsible for the black tern's hurried leave-taking last century, but terns are capricious birds and their colonies seem always impermanent.

The great auk was simply out of date, and could hold out against civilisation as little as the feudal system or the universal church.

The great bustard went not only because of persecution by sportsmen: the general enclosures and breaking-up of open country, the obsolescence of fallows, the growth of population and other factors helped to crowd it out. Even in Gilbert White's time the bustard's growing scarcity was attributed by observant farmers to

the heath being broken up for tillage and the disturbance of nesting birds by weeding the corn in spring.

'The scenes are desert now and bare
Where flourished once a forest fair'

sang Scott, and with the trees vanished the native capercaillie, to be re-established as easily as the new plantations last century.

Not one of these species was ever known to the majority of Englishmen, and perhaps the most universal bird which has virtually abandoned England is the honey-buzzard, whose decrease was initiated by forest clearance, accelerated by gamekeepers and consummated by the collector only when it was far below strength. Certainly full protection might bring it back, but without the great forests which are gone it could never be generally abundant. One other bird might be added to the obituary, the hen-harrier, which is principally the victim of the gamekeeper. In wild places it could still make a good living if allowed. Omitting the doubtful goshawk, this makes twelve lost species, for only one of which the collector can be held a principal culprit, while the epicure must shoulder some blame for three.

All these cases are far more widely known than those of the increase or decrease of existing species, but before dealing with these it is only just to refer to the birds which to our knowledge have been gained during the same period. By the same rough methods these may be placed at twelve. The red-legged partridge and little owl, though not favourites, are as interesting as almost any native bird and are in most parts of the country already common. The Canada goose is a spectacular and now well-established species and the introduced capercaillie cancels out with our lost native one. These four thriving birds owe their introduction directly to man, and the fact of their recent establishment is undoubted.

Unless we count remote St. Kilda as a true part of Great Britain, the fulmar is a new British bird since the 'seventies, and in any case its nesting in England is one of the latest and most cheering events in our ornithological history.

To include the hawfinch as a new British bird may be considered rather perilous, yet it was fairly certainly a winter visitor to most parts in White's and Markwick's time and, judging by its increase since Doubleday found it nesting, can hardly have been an established species when the crane was with us.

The gadwall (at first introduced), the long-tailed duck (1911), the black-necked grebe (1904), and probably also the scaup and pintail are new breeding species within living memory. Most

probably, to a great extent, their advent has been made possible, as the increase of so many others has been aided, by the disuse of the *diabolically destructive decoy* and the improved supply of meat, which latter has made it unnecessary to shoot for the pot to any considerable extent. *Certainly there must be other reasons, for to the scaup and long-tailed duck these scarcely apply; they have possibly been crowded out of their old homes as Miss Baxter and Miss Rintoul suggest in their recent work on Scottish duck.*

One more bird must be placed on both lists—the whooper swan, which has recommenced nesting since the War after an absence of over a century.

This gives a total (not counting such recently discovered species as the marsh warbler and willow tit) as follows :

<i>Lost.</i>	<i>Gained.</i>
Crane.	Red-legged Partridge.
Spoonbill.	Hawfinch.
Avocet.	Capercaillie (introduced).
Great Bustard.	Little Owl.
Capercaillie (native race).	Canada Goose.
Great Auk.	Gadwall.
Savi's Warbler.	Long-tailed Duck.
Black Tern.	Scaup.
Black-tailed Godwit.	Pintail.
Honey-Buzzard.	Fulmar.
Ruff and Reeve.	Black-necked Grebe.
Hen-harrier.	Whooper Swan
Whooper Swan	TOTAL, 12
TOTAL, 13	

and, extremely doubtfully : goshawk.

There remain to be considered those species which have conspicuously increased or decreased during the same period, and the balance of these being in favour of the former quite outweighs the slight preponderance of the vanished.

In reviewing the conspicuous fluctuations known to have taken place in our bird life, it will be helpful to group the various species affected under the cause which appears to be mainly responsible.

Taking the diminutions first, a sad development for the birds has been the still-continuing movement of population to the sea-side. Two centuries ago the sea was an unpleasant, noisy, and dangerous neighbour, only appreciated by those whose vocations forced them to live near it.

Not, in fact, till about 1780 does the rush to the sea perceptibly

begin, and it was much later when the birds were first seriously affected. But now, especially in Kent, Sussex and Lancashire, sea-fronts stretch unbroken for miles where shore-birds used to swarm. From Rottingdean to past West Worthing, for instance, the façade extends practically unbroken for fifteen miles, and Bungalow Town has within the last thirty years covered the breeding haunt of several species of shore birds and robbed of their winter refuge many more. It is amusing (or pitiable) to read nowadays that Markwick (before 1795) saw an avocet on the shore at Bexhill, and that over thirty years later still Lord Malmesbury shot a black-cock on the site of St. Peter's church, in the very heart of Bournemouth. For just as the sea-fronts expelled shore birds, the suburbs and hind-parts of these new seaside resorts accounted for many others; we know, for instance, that Montagu's harriers swarmed on the heaths where Bournemouth sprawls, and the Dartford warbler, too, was probably there in strength.

Except the ringed plover and the oystercatcher (and perhaps also the sheldrake) it is difficult to name any one species seriously affected by this cause, but it was probably more or less disastrous to many. It is difficult to believe that the invasion of Brighthelmston by the Prince Regent's gentlemen was wholly without effect on Gilbert White's Cornish choughs which, he says, 'abound, and breed on Beachy Head and on all the cliffs of the Sussex coast,' but have disappeared long ago, or that the rise of many south-eastern resorts has not been a factor in the increasing rarity of the Kentish plover, or that the peregrine falcon and raven were unaffected by the growth of population about their haunts, which at the very least multiplied their potential enemies. Inland, too, the same thing happened: in 1856 Yarrell describes Shepherd's Bush as 'a swampy situation about three miles west of London.'

Another factor against the shy species was the coming of the railways, which probably drove the bearded tits from Lancing, and (according to Mr. Mellersh) the ravens from the Wye Valley fifty years ago.

The dwindling of forests had helped to make black game rare by Gilbert White's time (he attributes it to 'shooting flying'), and buzzards, if not to a certain extent nightjars and others, have felt the lack of undisturbed woodland. The buzzard especially is a species which, though badly hit by the gamekeeper (or, to speak more plainly, by the pheasant-worshipping landowner), could never recover anything like its former numbers without larger woods and fewer people.

Very much the same applies to the less persecuted hobby.

Persecution pure and simple accounts for the position of the white-tailed eagle, the carrion crow, and the tenacious sparrow-hawk, the two latter hardly to be regretted by a lover of other birds.

The enclosures killed off not only our native yeomen, more valuable than any bird, but in varying degrees wheatears, quails, stone-curlews, lapwings, hen- and Montagu's harriers and others. Most of these, however, were affected by other great factors. If the old shepherds were right, the wheatear nests far more commonly now on the Sussex Downs than it did in the great days of wheatear-netting. Perhaps the cultivation of so much waste drove it to colonise one of the few remaining areas, but, as a whole, it has probably declined in numbers.

The quail is hard to place, but to attribute accounts of its former abundance to the memory of only the good years is surely unsound; there are no longer good quail years nowadays. The hen- and Montagu's harriers were probably brought below safety-level by the vanishing of wild places, as well as gamekeeping.

The improvement of agriculture has caused some natural changes in our avifauna. The inventor of rotation of crops was a poor benefactor to the fallow-nesting stone-curlew, which felt the improvement most heavily. The devilish ingenuity of modern reapers may soon leave us with only their whirl in place of the corncrake's voice, for sitting birds are killed or their eggs broken by the close-cropping monster, instead of being avoided by the slow, inefficient sickle.

An interesting case is the lapwing. Shooting of adults in winter and the systematic robbery of its eggs have probably proved far less a drain than the practice of rolling fields at laying-time which, as Sir W. Beach Thomas points out, is a disaster to the species. The insertion of a 'special proviso for the protection of the peewit and its eggs in the Wild Birds' Protection Bill' will probably be even less helpful to the sinking species than the remainder of those Acts. The tragedy of it is that the rolling has to take place to combat wireworms, and as the bird lives on such pests, it would do the work itself if allowed a hold on life. Quite apart from its immense economic value, the lapwing is the most romantic species among our common birds, and will be as great a loss in both ways as the swallow.

The linnet, and more still the goldfinch, have certainly suffered from bird-catchers, but it is doubtful whether these took much heavier toll than those birds of prey which their blood-brothers, the gamekeepers, disposed of, and the dwindling of the thistle-wastes

with the great spread of agriculture last century was probably the deciding factor. Both species are too sturdy and adaptable to be in danger of extinction unless the ground is cut away from under them.

Of the birds which we are in danger of losing, the cry is loudest about the Dartford warbler. Hardly a hint is given of any reason beyond the detestable Mr. Smithers and his fellows. Mr. Smithers was a taxidermist of south-west Surrey (when the species was still common there) about whom Gould had the calm hypocrisy (having safely provided himself with enough specimens through his agency) to 'trust that he would be more sparing in future.' It is an interesting piece of psychology that on Smithers, a pitiable product of a pernicious system, W. H. Hudson's wrath fell undiluted, while the boys to whom he paid a shilling a clutch were passed over as guiltless. Compared with the buyers, the collectors, the real authors and instigators of the mischief, both these classes of accomplices are merely to be pitied that they could prefer a little money to the life of such magic-presenced little birds. That they sold their souls for cash is not to be wondered at in their circumstances, and the more blame falls on those who, having had the education and the training to value life and appreciate beauty, stole our inheritance from us.

But the heart-breaking decline of the Dartford warbler is not solely due to such creatures. The facts that the heath on which Latham first discovered it a century and a half ago is now a fast-spreading suburb, and that the Bournemouth district, where it was once common enough to be locally called 'French blackbird,' is now 'developed' suggests that the growth of population has borne its part, and the decrease of gorse commons added to the bad seasons helped to bring it so lamentably below the safety-line.

The planting of a few wide gorse commons on unproductive land would make a glorious and inexpensive sanctuary for this treasure, which is still not beyond salvaging. Mr. H. J. Massingham has a wide experience of his own besides the benefit of W. H. Hudson's, but I hope he is wrong in estimating its numbers in the four south-eastern counties at ten pairs. I myself know only one breeding place, and that outside his limits, but in Sussex I have twice in autumn seen stragglers, and at one other spot within the area I have several times noticed odd birds out of the season.

A host of species witness to the obvious truth that man cannot make the desert blossom as the rose, and keep the desert-dwellers into the bargain. The extensive drainage instituted by James I

was detrimental to bitterns (now to some extent recovering), bearded reedlings, several species which have disappeared, and others which like the once-diminished redshank have risen again since. It is difficult to know whether to count the marsh harrier a depleted or a vanished species, but still more difficult to decide on the ethics or wisdom of encouraging it and Montagu's harriers at the expense of such treasure-species as the bearded reedling (or bearded tit) which, by all accounts, needs only a severe enough winter to follow the dodo as far as we are concerned.

It is a poor emigrant and once gone will not return without definite re-introduction.

The kingfisher, appallingly common in glass cases, owes its rarity also to persecution by fishing interests and perhaps indirectly to tar-poisoning in streams. The osprey has fallen to collectors as well as fishermen, but in spite of ferocious measures the red-breasted merganser and heron have fortunately been less greatly affected. Anglers are in fact almost as guilty as collectors, for not only are they intolerant of feathered competition, but they demand from the jay and others, as they used to exact from the dotterel and even the avocet, a heavy toll of fly-feathers.

From various causes several other species must be added to the sick list. Of these, the golden eagle, grey lag goose, and great skua have, we may hope, seen their blackest days and will continue at about the same strength in their present restricted breeding areas.

There are two species, both beautiful, the chough and roseate tern, which have decreased in many cases unaccountably. For want of a better theory competition has been suggested, and as both have pushful relatives it may well stand by default, though no real evidence in its favour appears to exist.

A parallel case is that of the black guillemot : all three seem to be the most temperamental species of their families.

Not so much persecution in France, or even cold springs and summers seem to me to be responsible for the tragic decrease of swallows and martins, as yet another aspect of modern civilisation—in superseding the horse and making effective war on its satellite flies, on which these two delightful hirundines are dependent.

There remains one more species trampled underfoot in the devastating 'march of civilisation,' and it provides a striking example of the distorting effects of over-zealous Protectionism. 'The kite, or glead,' said the late W. H. Hudson, 'is another melancholy example of the effect of pitiless persecution of some of our finest birds by game-preservers and, as the species became rare,

by collectors of "British-killed" specimens and "British-taken" eggs. Once a common species in the British Islands, it is now reduced to a miserable remnant.'

Certainly it is, but to put this down solely to these causes is not at all consistent with dates. In 1856 it is one of the extremely few species of hawk in which Yarrell notices any decrease, and he also states that Montagu (c. 1800) saw only one in Devon during twelve years. Such a county as Devon is one of the most suited for kites, as is shown by its having been (in 1913) the first English county in which the species attempted to recommence nesting. If the kite was already so rare by 1800, (and we find that though White saw some along the wild and wooded West Sussex Downs the bird was little known to him,) it certainly seems that, whatever the cause, decay must have set in before the gamekeeper's reign of terror. And knowing as we do that the kite was once a familiar scavenger of London streets and that it still fulfils the office abroad, it seems at least probable that not so much the gamekeeper as the increased regard for sanitation doomed it to a great reduction in numbers.

After such a tale of woe it is refreshing to come at last to those birds which have gained in numbers. Topographically the most striking change has been the spread of towns, and with them of unwelcome house-sparrows, and probably also of blackbirds, throstles, robins, and even swifts.

Many species have increased from several causes, as ring-doves from the spread of copses, arable lands and fir plantations, or turtle-doves with the rise of copses and hedge-country in place of forest and waste. To judge by White, the garden warbler and white-throat are commoner, too, and the lesser whitethroat has spread enormously, probably with the great increase of hedges. Possibly the same causes have helped nesting lesser redpolls, while greenfinches and hawfinches have benefited also by the rise of large private grounds and shrubberies.

To the increase of copses and gardens may also be attributed a rise in the numbers of tits, while cole-tits and goldcrests must have gained greatly from the extensive planting of conifers. Cross-bills also appreciate this if their frequent appearance round pine-rich Bournemouth is any guide. Copses and artificial means have forced the pheasant to a hothouse growth at the expense of more desirable species, though the greater privacy secured may account for the rise of woodcock.

Extension of range will account for the more common occurrence of little gull, shore lark, lapland bunting, and little bunting, all of

which, it should be noted, breed in the same regions. The cirr bunting, a resident, has spread apparently with the enclosures, though not on any large scale.

The starling has undoubtedly increased at an enormous rate, benefiting on all sides by the spread of suitable chimney-pots, the increase of arable land last century, and the simultaneous growth of fruit-farming. The less noticeable tree-sparrow has also spread on a large scale, and so has the stock-dove, which during the eighteenth century fell off in numbers, according to Gilbert White.

Protection has given a great impetus to the black-headed gull, but it is one of those few incorrigibly adaptable species to which it would be difficult to do any harm, while the Bittern's resurrection is certainly a feather in the cap of the Protectionists.

The pied woodpecker (to adopt Hudson's sensible name for the great spotted) is commoner than ever, and the green woodpecker can hardly drive to melancholy the most confirmed pessimist.

Then there is a long list of species breeding on inland waters, all of which have been greatly relieved by the improved meat supply which, as previously pointed out, has caused their destruction on any large scale to cease because it no longer pays. In this category fall the tufted duck, great-crested grebe, shoveler and pochard, while the decline of wild-fowling has been favourable also to the sheldrake, redshank, greenshank, and common scoter. Certain sea birds have increased partly through protection generally, but more still through the excellent system of watchers at their breeding grounds. The more noteworthy of these are the common gull, great skua, and arctic and sandwich terns.

These complete the lists of species, but it should be remembered when reading them that ornithologists differ greatly in their opinions as to the status of various birds compared with that of a hundred or two hundred years ago, and for this reason a mathematically exact balance is not possible. Tabulating those species which appear to have altered considerably in numbers without being entirely new or extinct, we have :

Increased.

Turtle-dove.
Ring-dove.
House-sparrow.
Blackbird (slightly).
Throstle (slightly).
Redbreast.
Swift.
Garden Warbler (slightly).

Decreased.

Ringed Plover (slightly).
Oyster-catcher.
Sheldrake (slightly).
Chough.
Kentish Plover.
Peregrine Falcon (slightly).
Bearded Reedling.
Black Grouse.

Increased.

Whitethroat.
 Lesser Whitethroat.
 Lesser Redpoll (slightly).
 Greenfinch.
 Great tit.
 Cole-tit.
 Blue-tit.
 Long-tailed tit.
 Goldcrest.
 Crossbill.
 Pheasant.
 Shore Lark.
 Lapland Bunting.
 Little Bunting.
 Cirl Bunting.
 Little Gull.
 Starling.
 Tree-sparrow.
 Stock-dove.
 Black-headed Gull.
 Bittern.
 Pied Woodpecker.
 Green Woodpecker (slightly).
 Tufted Duck.
 Great-crested Grebe.
 Shoveler.
 Pochard.
 Sheldrake.
 Redshank.
 Greenshank.
 Common Scoter.
 Common Gull.
 Great Skua.
 Arctic Tern.
 Sandwich Tern.
 Woodcock.

TOTAL, 44

Decreased.

Buzzard.
 Nightjar (slightly).
 Wheatear.
 Quail.
 Stone Curlew.
 Lapwing.
 Montagu's Harrier.
 Corncrake.
 Linnet (slightly).
 Goldfinch (slightly).
 Dartford Warbler.
 Bittern.
 Osprey.
 Golden Eagle.
 Grey Lag Goose.
 Great Skua.
 Roseate Tern.
 Black Guillemot.
 Swallow.
 House-martin.
 Kite.
 Raven.
 Hobby.
 White-tailed Eagle.
 Carrion Crow.
 Sparrowhawk (slightly).
 Kingfisher.
 Marsh Harrier.
 Dotterel.
 Heron (slightly).
 Red-necked Phalarope.

TOTAL, 39

Here the balance of five on the right side fully compensates for the deficit of one in the more absolute category, especially since some of the right-hand column have (fortunately) very slender titles to be there. It must be added that three species occur in both columns; of these the bittern and great skua after disastrous times are now once more spreading, and the sheldrake has apparently

been exterminated on some parts of the coast, whilst at the same time spreading on others.

It is not to be expected that Protectionists will find it to their liking, but the moral of it seems to be that in replaceable fauna like birds nature is automatically stabilised ; and that if you succeed in killing off one species another will fill its place while the unnatural order lasts. Perhaps after the break-up of our power the old will gradually return.

But there is one fact which does not seem to be generally enough grasped. It is a far too common attitude to think that if a species is protected it must increase, if persecuted it can only diminish. Look at the wood-pigeon, or ring-dove as it should be called. It is shot for sport, massacred for food, warred against as a pest by fair means or foul. It lays only two eggs in a nest usually neither well concealed nor inaccessible, which it leaves with enough clatter to wake the dead. Alone among British birds except the house-sparrow it receives no protection during any part of the year, being carefully excepted by name from both close-time and Sunday protection. But in spite of all, the ring-dove more than maintains the position it won in defiance of the Victorians. It is one of our strongest species in appearance, manner and numbers, and its present strength is due not to human help of any sort but to the simple reason that an adaptable species, given ample food resources and nesting localities, cannot be kept down by any weapon yet invented.

And there are other similar examples. Persecution has scarcely touched the jay while, of course, the house-sparrow is notoriously difficult to check. The hatred of most fruit-growers has caused little uneasiness to the hawfinch, bullfinch, starling and blackbird among others. Since the fulmar was deprived of protection at its only original British breeding place of St. Kilda, it has spread like an epidemic over the British Isles.

But the particular case of the wood-pigeon is illuminating for another well-known reason. In the lands of persecution one of the wariest species, it came up to London not long ago and, unlike most country cousins, made its fortune there. What it found was a friendly welcome, and its response was so immediate and wholehearted that even now it sounds scarcely credible. When such a large ill-treated species can so rapidly acquire trust and confidence, perhaps W. H. Hudson was altogether right in leaving money, not for the provision of more watchers, but for the fostering of goodwill towards birds, which is surely the greatest mission that a bird-lover can support.

E. M. NICHOLSON.

‘THE LITTLE MEXICAN.’

THE shopkeeper called it, affectionately, a little Mexican; and little, for a Mexican, it may have been. But in this Europe of ours, where space is limited and the scale smaller, the little Mexican was portentous, a giant among hats. It hung there, in the centre of the hatter's window, a huge black aureole, fit for a king among devils. But no devil walked that morning through the streets of Ravenna: only the mildest of literary tourists. Those were the days when very large hats seemed in my eyes very desirable, and it was on my head, all unworthy, that the aureole of darkness was destined to descend. On my head; for at the first sight of the hat I had run into the shop, tried it on, found the size correct, and bought it, without bargaining, at a foreigner's price. I left the shop with the little Mexican on my head, and my shadow on the pavements of Ravenna was like the shadow of an umbrella pine.

The little Mexican is very old now, and moth-eaten and green; but I still preserve it. Occasionally, for old association's sake, I even wear it. Dear Mexican! it represents for me a whole epoch of my life. It stands for emancipation and the first years at the University. It symbolises the discovery of how many new things, new ideas, new sensations!—of French literature, of alcohol, of modern painting, of Nietzsche, of love, of metaphysics, of Mallarmé, of syndicalism, and of goodness knows what else. But, above all, I prize it because it reminds me of my first discovery of Italy. It re-evokes for me—my little Mexican—all the thrills and astonishments and virgin raptures of that first Italian tour in the early autumn of nineteen hundred and twelve. Urbino, Rimini, Ravenna, Ferrara, Modena, Mantua, Verona, Vicenza, Padua, Venice—my first impressions of all these fabulous names lie, like a hatful of jewels, in the crown of the little Mexican. Shall I ever have the heart to throw it away?

And then, of course, there is Tirabassi. Without the little Mexican I should never have made Tirabassi's acquaintance. He would never have taken me, in my small unemphatic English hat, for a painter. And I should never, in consequence, have seen the frescoes, never have talked with the old Count, never heard of the

Colombella. Never. . . . When I think of that, the little Mexican seems to me more than ever precious.

It was, of course, very typical of Tirabassi to suppose, from the size of my hat, that I must be a painter. He had a neat military mind that refused to accept the vague disorder of the world. He was for ever labelling and pigeon-holing and limiting his universe; and when the classified objects broke out of their pigeon-holes and tore the labels from off their necks, Tirabassi was puzzled and annoyed. In any case, it was obvious to him, from the first moment he saw me in the restaurant at Padua, that I must be a painter. All painters wear large black hats. I was wearing the little Mexican. *Ergo*, I was a painter. It was syllogistic, unescapable.

He sent the waiter to ask me whether I would do him the honour of taking coffee with him at his table. For the first moment, I must confess, I was a little alarmed. This dashing young lieutenant of cavalry—what on earth could he want with me? The most absurd fancies filled my mind: I had committed, all unconsciously, some frightful solecism; I had trodden on the toes of the lieutenant's honour, and he was about to challenge me to a duel. The choice of weapons, I rapidly reflected, would be mine. But what—oh what on earth should I choose? Swords? I had never learnt to fence. Pistols? I had once fired six shots at a bottle and missed it with every shot. Would there be time to write one or two letters, make some sort of a testament about my personal belongings? From this anguish of mind the waiter, returning a moment later with my fried octopus, delivered me. The Lieutenant Count, he explained in a whisper of confidence, had a villa on the Brenta, not far from Strà. A villa (he spread out his hands in a generous gesture) full of paintings,—full, full, full! And he was anxious that I should see them, because he felt sure that I was interested in paintings. Oh, of course—I smiled rather foolishly, for the waiter seemed to expect some sort of confirmatory interpolation from me—I *was* interested in paintings; very much. In that case, said the waiter, the Count would be delighted to take me to see them. He left me, still puzzled, but vastly relieved. At any rate, I was not being called upon to make the very embarrassing choice between swords and pistols.

Surreptitiously, whenever he was not looking in my direction, I examined the Lieutenant Count. His appearance was not

typically Italian. (But then, what is a typical Italian?) He was not, that is to say, blue-jowled, beady-eyed, swarthy and aquiline. On the contrary, he had pale ginger hair, grey eyes, a snub nose, and a freckled complexion. I knew plenty of young Englishmen who might have been Count Tirabassi's less vivacious brothers.

He received me, when the time came, with the most exquisite courtesy, apologising for the uncereemonious way in which he had made my acquaintance. 'But as I felt sure,' he said, 'that you were interested in art, I thought you would forgive me for the sake of what I have to show you.' I couldn't help wondering why the Count felt so certain about my interest in art. It was only later, when we left the restaurant together, that I understood; for as I put on my hat to go, he pointed with a smile at the little Mexican. 'One can see,' he said, 'that you are a real artist.' I was left at a loss, not knowing what to answer.

After we had exchanged the preliminary courtesies, the Lieutenant plunged at once—entirely for my benefit, I could see—into a conversation about art. 'Nowadays,' he said, 'we Italians don't take enough interest in art. In a modern country, you see . . . ' He shrugged his shoulders, leaving the sentence unfinished. 'But I don't think that's right. I adore art—simply adore it. When I see foreigners going round with their guide-books, standing for half an hour in front of one picture, looking first at the book, then at the picture—' and here he gave the most brilliantly finished imitation of an Anglican clergyman conscientiously 'doing' the Mantegna chapel: first a glance at the imaginary guide-book held open in his two hands, then, with the movement of a chicken that drinks, a lifting of the face towards an imaginary fresco, a long stare between puckered eyelids, a falling-open of the mouth, and finally, a turning back of the eyes towards the inspired pages of Baedeker—' when I see them, I feel ashamed for us Italians.' The Count spoke very earnestly—feeling, no doubt, that his talent for mimicry had carried him a little too far. 'And if they stand for half an hour looking at the thing, I go and stand there for an hour. That's the way to understand great art—the only way.' He leaned back in his chair and sipped his coffee. 'Unfortunately,' he added after a moment, 'one hasn't got much time.'

I agreed with him. 'When one can only get to Italy for a month at a stretch, like myself—'

'Ah, but if only I could travel about the world like you!' The Count sighed. 'But here I am, cooped up in this wretched town. And when I think of the enormous capital that's hanging there on the walls of my house . . . ' He checked himself, shaking his head. Then, changing his tone, he began to tell me about his house on the Brenta. It sounded altogether too good to be true. Carpioni, yes—I could believe in frescoes by Carpioni; almost anyone might have those. But a hall by Veronese, but rooms by Tiepolo, all in the same house—that sounded incredible. I could not help believing that the Count's enthusiasm for art had carried him away. But, in any case, to-morrow I should be able to judge for myself; the Count had invited me to lunch with him.

We left the restaurant. Still embarrassed by the Count's references to my little Mexican, I walked by his side in silence up the arcaded street.

'I am going to introduce you to my father,' said the Count. 'He, too, adores the arts.'

More than ever I felt myself a swindler. I had wriggled into the Count's confidence on false pretences; my hat was a lie. I felt that I ought to do something to clear up the misunderstanding. But the Count was so busy complaining to me about his father that I had no opportunity to put in my little explanation. I didn't listen very attentively, I confess, to what he was saying. In the course of a year at Oxford I had heard so many young men complain of their fathers. Not enough money, too much interference—the story was a stale one. And at that time, moreover, I was taking a very high philosophical line about this sort of thing. I was pretending that people didn't interest me—only books, only ideas. What a fool one can make of oneself at that age!

'Eccoci!' said the Count. We halted in front of the Café Pedrochi. 'He always comes here for his coffee.'

And where else, indeed, should he come for his coffee? Who, in Padua, would go anywhere else?

We found him sitting out on the terrace at the further end of the building. I had never, I thought, seen a jollier-looking old gentleman. The old Count had a red weather-beaten face, with white moustaches bristling gallantly upwards and a white imperial in the grand Risorgimento manner of Victor Emmanuel the Second. Under the white tufty eyebrows, and set in the midst of a webwork of fine wrinkles, the eyes were brown and bright

like a robin's. His long nose looked, somehow, more practically useful than the ordinary human nose, as though made for fine judicial sniffing, for delicate burrowing and probing. Thick-set and strong, he sat there solidly in his chair, his knees apart, his hands clasped over the knob of his cane, carrying his paunch with dignity—nobly, I had almost said—before him. He was dressed all in white linen—for the weather was still very hot—and his wide grey hat was tilted rakishly forward over his left eye. It gave one a real satisfaction to look at him : he was so complete, so perfect in his kind.

The young Count introduced me. 'This is an English gentleman. Signor . . . ?' He turned to me for the name.

'Oosselay,' I said, having learnt by experience that that was as near as any Italian could be expected to get to it.

'Signor Oosselay,' the young Count continued, 'is an artist.'

'Well, not exactly an artist,' I was beginning ; but he would not let me make an end.

'He is also very much interested in ancient art,' he continued. 'To-morrow I am taking him to Dolo to see the frescoes. I know he will like them.'

We sat down at the old Count's table ; critically he looked at me and nodded. '*Benissimo*,' he said ; and then added, 'Let's hope you'll be able to do something to help us sell the things.'

This was startling. I looked in some perplexity towards the young Count. He was frowning angrily at his father. The old gentleman had evidently said the wrong thing ; he had spoken, I guessed, too soon. At any rate, he took his son's hint and glided off serenely on another tack.

'The fervid phantasy of Tiepolo,' he began rotundly, 'the cool unimpassioned splendour of Veronese—at Dolo you will see them contrasted.' I listened attentively, while the old gentleman thundered on in what was evidently a set speech. When it was over, the young Count got up ; he had to be back at the barracks by half-past two. I, too, made as though to go ; but the old man laid his hand on my arm. 'Stay with me,' he said. 'I enjoy your conversation infinitely.' And, as he himself had hardly ceased speaking for one moment since first I set eyes on him, I could well believe it. With the gesture of a lady lifting her skirts out of the mud (and those were the days when skirts still had to be lifted), the young Count picked up his trailing sabre and swaggered off, very military, very brilliant and glittering, like a soldier on the stage, into the sunlight, out of sight.

The old man's bird-bright eyes followed him as he went. 'A good boy, Fabio,' he said, turning back to me at last,— 'a good son!' He spoke affectionately; but there was a hint, I thought, in his smile, in the tone of his voice—a hint of amusement, of irony. It was as though he were adding, by implication, 'But good boys, after all, are fools to be so good.' I found myself, in spite of my affectation of detachment, extremely curious about this old gentleman. And he, for his part, was not the man to allow anyone in his company to remain for long in splendid isolation. He insisted on my taking an interest in his affairs. He told me all about them—or at any rate all about some of them—pouring out his confidences with an astonishing absence of reserve. Next to the intimate and trusted friend, the perfect stranger is the best of all possible confidants. There is no commercial traveller of moderately sympathetic appearance who has not, in the course of his days in the train, his evenings in the parlours of commercial hotels, been made the repository of a thousand intimate secrets. Even in England. And in Italy—goodness knows what commercial travellers get told in Italy! Even I, a foreigner, speaking the language badly, and not very skilful anyhow in conducting a conversation with strangers, have heard queer things in the second-class carriages of Italian trains. Here, too, on Pedrochi's terrace I was to hear queer things. A door was to be left ajar, and through the crack I was to have a peep at unfamiliar lives.

'What I should do without him,' the old gentleman continued, 'I really don't know. The way he manages the estate is simply wonderful.' And he went rambling off into long digressions about the stupidity of peasants, the incompetence and dishonesty of bailiffs, the badness of the weather, the spread of phylloxera, the high price of manure. The upshot of it all was that, since Fabio had taken over the estate, everything had gone well; even the weather had improved. 'It's such a relief,' the Count concluded, 'to feel that I have someone in charge on whom I can rely—someone I can trust absolutely. It leaves me free to devote my mind to more important things.'

I could not help wondering what the important things were; but it would have been impertinent, I felt, to ask. Instead, I put a more practical question. 'But what will happen,' I asked, 'when your son's military duties take him away from Padua?'

The old Count gave me a wink and laid his forefinger, very deliberately, to the side of his long nose. The gesture was rich with significance. 'They never will,' he said. 'It's all arranged.'

A little *combinazione*, you know. I have a friend in the Ministry. His military duties will always keep him in Padua.' He winked again and smiled.

I could not help laughing, and the old Count joined in with a joyous Ha-ha! that was the expression of a profound satisfaction, that was, as it were, a burst of self-applause. He was evidently proud of his little *combinazione*. But he was prouder still of the other combination, about which he now confidentially leaned across the table to tell me. It was decidedly the subtler of the two.

'And it's not merely his military duties,' he said, wagging at me the thick, yellow-nailed forefinger which he had laid against his nose—'it's not merely his military duties that'll keep the boy in Padua. It's his domestic duties. He's married. I married him.' He leaned back in his chair and surveyed me, smiling. The little wrinkles round his eyes seemed to be alive. 'That boy, I said to myself, must settle down. He must have a nest, or else he'll fly away. He must have roots, or else he'll run. And his poor old father will be left in the lurch. He's young, I thought, but he must marry. He *must* marry. At once.' And the old gentleman made great play with his forefinger. It was a long story. His old friend, the Avvocato Monaldeschi, had twelve children—three boys and nine girls. (And here there were digressions about the Avvocato and the size of good Catholic families.) The eldest girl was just the right age for Fabio. No money, of course; but a good girl and pretty, and very well brought up, and religious. Religious—that was very important; for it was essential that Fabio should have a large family—to keep him more effectually rooted, the old Count explained—and with these modern young women brought up outside the Church one could never be certain of children. Yes, her religion was most important; he had looked into that very carefully before selecting her. Well, the next thing, of course, was that Fabio should be induced to select her. It had been a matter of bringing the horse to water *and* making him drink. Oh, a most difficult and delicate business! For Fabio prided himself on his independence; and he was obstinate, like a mule. Nobody should interfere with his affairs; nobody should make him do what he didn't want to. And he was so touchy, he was so pig-headed that often he wouldn't do what he really wanted merely because somebody else had suggested that he ought to do it. So I could imagine—the old Count spread out his hands before me—just how difficult and delicate a business it had been. Only a consummate diplomat could have succeeded.

He did it by throwing them together a great deal and talking, meanwhile, about the rashness of early marriages, the uselessness of poor wives, the undesirability of wives not of noble birth. It worked like a charm: within four months Fabio was engaged, two months later he was married, and ten months after that he had a son and heir. And now he was fixed, rooted. The old gentleman chuckled; and I could fancy that I was listening to the chuckling of some old white-haired tyrant of the *Quattrocento* congratulating himself on the success of some peculiarly ingenious stroke of policy—a rich city induced to surrender itself by fraud, a dangerous rival lured by fair words into a cage and trapped. Poor Fabio, I thought; and also, what a waste of talent!

Yes, the old Count went on, now he would never go. He was not like his younger brother Lucio. Lucio was a rogue, *furbo*, sly; he had no conscience. But Fabio had ideas about duty and lived up to them. Once he had engaged himself he would stick to his engagements, obstinately, with all the mulishness of his character. Well, now he lived on the estate, in the big painted house at Dolo. Three days a week he came into Padua for his military duties, and the rest of his time he devoted to the estate. It brought in, now, more than it had ever done before. But goodness knew, the old gentleman complained, that was little enough. Bread and oil and wine and milk and chickens and beef—there was plenty of those and to spare. Fabio could have a family of fifty and they would never starve. But ready money—there wasn't much of that. 'In England,' the Count concluded, 'you are rich. But we Italians . . .' He shook his head.

I spent the next quarter of an hour trying to persuade him that we were not all millionaires. But in vain. My statistics, based on somewhat imperfect memories of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb, carried no conviction. In the end I gave it up.

The next morning Fabio appeared at the door of my hotel in a large, very old and very noisy Fiat. It was the family machine-of-all-work, bruised, scratched and dirtied by years of service. Fabio drove it with a brilliant and easy recklessness. We rushed through the town, swerving from one side of the narrow street to the other with a disregard for the rules of the road which, in a pedantic country like England, would have meant at the least a five-pound fine and an endorsed licence. But here the carabinieri, walking gravely in couples under the arcades, let us pass without comment. Right or left—after all, what did it matter?

'Why do you keep the silencer out?' I shouted through the frightful clamour of the engine.

Fabio slightly shrugged his shoulders. 'E più allegro così,' he answered.

I said no more. From a member of this hardy race which likes noise, which enjoys discomfort, a nerve-ridden Englishman could hardly hope to get much sympathy.

We were soon out of the town. Trailing behind us a seething white wake of dust, and with the engine rattling off its explosions like a battery of machine-guns, we raced along the Fusina road. On either hand extended the cultivated plain. The road was bordered by ditches, and on the banks beyond, instead of hedges, stood rows of little pollards, with grape-laden vines festooned from tree to tree. White with the dust, tendrils, fruit and leaves hung there like so much goldsmith's work sculptured in frosted metal—hung like the swags of fruit and foliage looped round the flanks of a great silver bowl. We hurried on. Soon, on our right hand, we had the Brenta, sunk deep between the banks of its canal. And now we were at Strà. Through gateways rich with fantastic stucco, down tunnels of undeciduous shade, we looked in a series of momentary glimpses into the heart of the park. And now for an instant the statues on the roof of the villa beckoned against the sky and were passed. On we went. To right and left, on either bank of the river, I got every now and then a glimpse of some enchanting mansion, gay and brilliant even in decay. Little baroque garden houses peeped at me over walls; and through great gates, at the end of powdery cypress avenues—half humorously, it seemed—the magniloquent and frivolous façades soared up in defiance of all the rules. I should have liked to do the journey slowly, to stop here and there, to look, to savour at leisure; but Fabio disdained to travel at anything less than fifty kilometres to the hour, and I had to be content with momentary and precarious glimpses. It was in these villas, I reflected, as we bumped along at the head of our desolation of white dust, that Casanova used to come and spend the summer; seducing the chambermaids, taking advantage of terrified marchionesses in *calèches* during thunderstorms, bamboozling soft-witted old senators of Venice with his fortune-telling and black magic. Gorgeous and happy scoundrel! In spite of my professed detachment, I envied him. And indeed, what was that famous detachment but a disguised expression of the envy which the successes and audacities

of a Casanova must necessarily arouse in every timid and diffident mind? If I lived in splendid isolation, it was because I lacked the audacity to make war—even to make entangling alliances. I was absorbed in these pleasing self-condemnatory thoughts when the car slowed down and came to a standstill in front of a huge imposing gate. Fabio hooted impatiently on his horn; there was a scurry of footsteps, the sound of bolts being drawn, and the gate swung open. At the end of a short drive, very large and grave, very chaste and austere, stood the house. It was considerably older than most of the other villas I had seen in glimpses on our way. There was no frivolousness in its façade, no irregular grandiloquence. A great block of stuccoed brick; a central portico approached by steps and topped with a massive pediment; a row of rigid statues on the balustrade above the cornice. It was correctly—coldly even—Palladian. Fabio brought the car to a halt in front of the porch. We got out. At the top of the steps stood a young woman with a red-headed child in her arms. It was the Countess with the son and heir.

The Countess impressed me very agreeably. She was slim and tall—two or three inches taller than her husband—with dark hair drawn back from the forehead and twisted into a knot on the nape of her neck; dark eyes, vague, lustrous and melancholy like the eyes of a gentle animal; a skin brown and transparent like darkened amber. Her manner was gentle and unemphatic. She rarely gesticulated; I never heard her raise her voice. She spoke, indeed, very little. The old Count had told me that his daughter-in-law was religious, and from her appearance I could easily believe it. She looked at you with the calm remote regard of one whose life mostly goes on behind the eyes.

Fabio kissed his wife and then, bending his face towards the child, he made a frightful grimace and roared like a lion. It was all done in affection; but the poor little creature shrank away, terrified. Fabio laughed and pinched its ear.

'Don't tease him,' said the Countess gently. 'You'll make him cry.'

Fabio turned to me. 'That's what comes of leaving a boy to be looked after by women. He cries at everything. Let's come in,' he added. 'At present we only use two or three rooms on the ground floor and the kitchen in the basement. All the rest is deserted. I don't know how those old fellows managed to keep up their palaces. I can't.' He shrugged his shoulders. Through

a door on the right of the portico we passed into the house. 'This is our drawing-room and dining-room combined.'

It was a fine, big room, nobly proportioned—a double cube, I guessed—with doorways of sculptured marble and a magnificent fireplace flanked by a pair of nymphs on whose bowed shoulders rested a sloping overmantel carved with coats of arms and festoons of foliage. Round the walls ran a frieze, painted in grisaille; in a graceful litter of cornucopias and panoplies goddesses sumptuously reclined, cherubs wriggled and flew. The furniture was strangely mixed. Round a sixteenth-century dining-table that was a piece of Palladian architecture in wood were ranged eight chairs in the Viennese Secession style of 1905. A large chalet-shaped cuckoo clock from Bern hung on the wall between two cabinets of walnut, pilastered and pedimented to look like little temples, and with heroic statuettes in yellow boxwood standing in niches between the pillars. And then the pictures on the walls, the cretonnes with which the arm-chairs were covered! Tactfully, however, I admired everything, new as well as old.

'And now,' said the Count, 'for the frescoes.'

I followed him through one of the marble-framed doorways and found myself at once in the great central hall of the villa. The Count turned round on me. 'There!' he said, smiling triumphantly, with the air of one who has really succeeded in producing a rabbit out of an empty hat. And, indeed, the spectacle was sufficiently astonishing.

The walls of the enormous room were completely covered with frescoes which it did not need much critical judgment or knowledge to perceive were genuine Veroneses. The authorship was obvious, palpable. Who else could have painted those harmoniously undulating groups of figures set in their splendid architectural frame? Who else but Veronese could have combined such splendour with such coolness, so much extravagant opulence with such exquisite suavity?

'È grandioso!' I said to the Count.

And indeed it was. Grandiose: there was no other word. A rich triumphal arcade ran all round the room, four or five arches appearing on each wall. Through the arches one looked into a garden; and there, against a background of cypresses and statues and far-away blue mountains, companies of Venetian ladies and gentlemen gravely disported themselves. Under one arch they

were making music; through another one saw them sitting round a table, drinking one another's health in glasses of red wine, while a little blackamoor in a livery of green and yellow carried round the silver jug. In the next panel they were watching a fight between a monkey and a cat. On the opposite wall a poet was reading his verses to the assembled company; and next to him Veronese himself—the self-portrait was recognisable—stood at his easel, painting the picture of an opulent blonde in rose-coloured satin. At the feet of the artist lay his dog; two parrots and a monkey were sitting on the marble balustrade in the middle distance.

I gazed with delight. 'What a marvellous thing to possess!' I exclaimed, fairly carried away by my enthusiasm. 'I envy you.'

The Count made a little grimace and laughed. 'Shall we come and look at the Tiepolos?' he asked.

We passed through a couple of cheerful rooms by Carpioni—satyrs chasing nymphs through a romantic forest and, on the fringes of a seascape, a very eccentric rape of mermaids by centaurs—to step across a threshold into that brilliant universe, at once delicate and violently extravagant, wild and subtly orderly, which Tiepolo, in the last days of Italian painting, so masterfully and magically created. It was the story of Eros and Psyche, and the tale ran through three large rooms, spreading itself even on to the ceilings, where, in a pale sky dappled with white and golden clouds, the appropriate deities balanced themselves, diving or ascending through the empyrean with that air of being perfectly at home in their element which seems to belong, in nature, only to fishes and perhaps a few winged insects and birds.

Fabio had boasted to me that, in front of a picture, he could outstare any foreigner. But I was such a mortally long time admiring these dazzling phantasies that in the end he quite lost patience.

'I wanted to show you the farm before lunch,' he said, looking at his watch. 'There's only just time.' I followed him reluctantly.

We looked at the cows, the horses, the prize bull, the turkeys. We looked at the tall, thin haystacks, shaped like giant cigars set on end. We looked at the sacks of wheat in the barn. For lack of any better comment I told the Count that they reminded me of the sacks of wheat in English barns; he seemed delighted.

The farm buildings were set round an immense courtyard. We had explored three sides of this piazza ; now we came to the fourth, which was occupied by a long low building pierced with round archways and, I was surprised to see, completely empty.

'What's this ?' I asked, as we entered.

'It is nothing,' the Count replied, 'But it might, some day, become . . . *chi sa ?*' He stood there for a moment in silence, frowning pensively, with the expression of Napoleon on St. Helena—dreaming of the future, regretting past opportunities for ever lost. His freckled face, ordinarily a lamp for brightness, became incongruously sombre. Then all at once he burst out—damning life, cursing fate, wishing to God he could get away and do something instead of wasting himself here. I listened, making every now and then a vague noise of sympathy. What could I do about it ? And then, to my dismay, I found that I could do something about it, that I was expected to do something. I was being asked to help the Count to sell his frescoes. As an artist, it was obvious, I must be acquainted with rich patrons, museums, millionaires. I had seen the frescoes ; I could honestly recommend them. And now there was this perfected process for transferring frescoes on to canvas. The walls could easily be peeled of their painting, the canvases rolled up and taken to Venice. And from there it would be the easiest thing in the world to smuggle them on board a ship and get away with them. As for prices—if he could get a million and a half lire, so much the better ; but he'd take a million ; he'd even taken three-quarters. And he'd give me ten per cent. commission. . . .

And afterwards, when he'd sold his frescoes, what would he do ? To begin with—the Count smiled at me triumphantly—he'd turn this empty building in which we were now standing, into an up-to-date cheese factory. He could start the business handsomely on half a million, and then, using cheap female labour from the country round, he could be almost sure of making big profits at once. In a couple of years, he calculated, he'd be netting eighty or a hundred thousand a year from his cheeses. And then—ah then, he'd be independent, he'd be able to get away, he'd see the world ! He'd go to Brazil and the Argentine. An enterprising man with capital could always do well out there. He'd go to New York, to London, to Berlin, to Paris. There was nothing he could not do.

But meanwhile the frescoes were still on the walls—beautiful, no doubt (for, the Count reminded me, he adored art), but futile ;

a huge capital frozen into the plaster, eating its head off, utterly useless. Whereas, with his cheese factory . . .

Slowly we walked back towards the house.

I was in Venice again in the September of the following year, 1913. There were, I imagine, that autumn, more German honeymoon couples, more parties of rucksacked Wander-Birds than there had ever been in Venice before. There were too many, in any case, for me; I packed my bag and took the train for Padua.

I had not originally intended to see the young Tirabassi again. I didn't know, indeed, how pleased he would be to see me. For the frescoes—so far as I knew, at any rate—were still safely on the walls; the cheese-factory still remote in the future, in the imagination. I had written to him more than once, telling him that I was doing my best, but that at the moment, *et cetera*, *et cetera*. Not that I had ever held out much hope. I had made it clear from the first that my acquaintance among millionaires was limited, that I knew no directors of American museums, that I had nothing to do with any of the international picture dealers. But the Count's faith in me had remained, none the less, unshaken. It was the little Mexican, I believe, that inspired so much confidence. But now, after my letters—after all this lapse of time and nothing done—he might feel that I had let him down, deceived him somehow. That was why I took no steps to seek him out. But chance overruled my decision. On the third day of my stay in Padua, I ran into him in the street. Or, rather, he ran into me.

It was nearly six o'clock, and I had strolled down to the Piazza del Santo. At that hour, when the slanting light is full of colour and the shadows are long and profound, the great church, with its cupolas and turrets and campaniles, takes on an aspect more than ever fantastic and oriental. I had walked round the church, and now I was standing at the foot of Donatello's statue, looking up at the grim bronze man, the ponderously stepping beast, when I suddenly became aware that someone was standing very close behind me. I took a step to one side and turned round. It was Fabio. Wearing his famous expression of the sightseeing parson, he was gazing up at the statue, his mouth open in a vacant and fish-like gape. I burst out laughing.

'Did I look like that?' I asked.

'Precisely.' He laughed too. 'I've been watching you for the last ten minutes, mooning round the church. You English! Really . . .' He shook his head.

Together we strolled up the Via del Santo, talking as we went.

'I'm sorry I wasn't able to do anything about the frescoes,' I said. 'But really . . . ' I entered into explanations.

'Some day, perhaps.' Fabio was still optimistic.

'And how's the Countess?'

'Oh, she's very well,' said Fabio, 'considering. You know she had another son three or four months after you came to see us.'

'No?'

'She's expecting another now.' Fabio spoke rather gloomily, I thought. More than ever I admired the old Count's sagacity. But I was sorry for his son's sake that he had not a wider field in which to exercise his talents.

'And your father?' I asked. 'Shall we find him sitting at Pedrochi's, as usual?'

Fabio laughed. 'We shall not,' he said significantly. 'He's flown.'

'Flown?'

'Gone, vanished, disappeared.'

'But where?'

'Who knows?' said Fabio. 'My father is like the swallows: he comes and he goes. Every year. But the migration isn't regular. Sometimes he goes away in the spring; sometimes it's the autumn, sometimes it's the summer. One fine morning his man goes into his room to call him as usual, and he isn't there. Vanished. He might be dead. Oh, but he isn't.' Fabio laughed. 'Two or three months later, in he walks again, as though he were just coming back from a stroll in the Botanical Gardens. "Good evening. Good evening."' Fabio imitated the old Count's voice and manner, snuffing the air like a war-horse, twisting the ends of an imaginary white moustache. "'How's your mother? How are the girls? How have the grapes done this year?'" (Snuff, snuff.) "How's Lucio? And who the devil has left all this rubbish lying about in my study?'" Fabio burst into an indignant roar that made the loiterers in the Via Roma turn, astonished, in our direction.

'And where does he go?' I asked.

'Nobody knows. My mother used to ask, once. But she soon gave it up. It was no good. "Where have you been, Ascanio?" "My dear, I'm afraid the olive crop is going to be very poor this year." (Snuff, snuff.) And when she pressed him,

he would fly into a temper and slam the doors. . . . What do you say to an *apéritif*?' Pedrochi's open doors invited. We entered, chose a retired table, and sat down.

'But what do you suppose the old gentleman does when he's away?'

'Ah!' And making the richly significant gesture I had so much admired in his father, the young Count laid his finger against his nose and slowly, solemnly winked his left eye.

'You mean . . .?'

Fabio nodded. 'There's a little widow here in Padua.' With his extended finger the young Count described in the air an undulating line. 'Nice and plump. Black eyes. I've noticed that she generally seems to be out of town just at the time the old man does his migrations. But it may, of course, be a mere coincidence.' The waiter brought us our vermouth. Pensively the young Count sipped. The gaiety went out of his open lamp-like face. 'And meanwhile,' he went on, slowly and in an altered voice, 'I stay here, looking after the estate, so that the old man can go running round the world with his little pigeon—*la sua colombella*.' (The expression struck me as particularly choice.) 'Oh, it's funny, no doubt,' the young Count went on. 'But it isn't right. If I wasn't married I'd go clean away and try my luck somewhere else. I'd leave him to look after everything himself. But with a wife and two children—three children soon—how can I take the risk? At any rate, there's plenty to eat as long as I stay here. My only hope,' he added after a little pause, 'is in the frescoes.'

Which implied, I reflected, that his only hope was in me; I felt sorry for him.

In the spring of 1914 I sent two rich Americans to look at Fabio's villa. Neither of them made any offer to buy the frescoes; it would have astonished me if they had. But Fabio was greatly encouraged by their arrival. 'I feel,' he wrote to me, 'that a beginning has now been made. These Americans will go back to their country and tell their friends. Soon there will be a procession of millionaires coming to see the frescoes. Meanwhile, life is the same as ever. Rather worse, if anything. Our little daughter, whom we have christened Emilia, was born last month. My wife had a very bad time and is still far from well, which is very troublesome.' (It seemed a curious adjective to use, in the circumstances. But, coming from Fabio, I understood it; he was one of those exceedingly healthy people to whom any sort of illness is mysterious,

unaccountable and, above all, extraordinarily tiresome and irritating.) 'The day before yesterday my father disappeared again. I have not yet had time to find out if the Colombella has also vanished. My brother Lucio has succeeded in getting a motor bicycle out of him, which is more than I ever managed to do. But then, I was never one for creeping diplomatically round and round a thing, as he can do. I have been going very carefully into the cheese-factory business lately, and I am not sure that it might not be more profitable to set up a silk-weaving establishment instead. When you next come, I will go into details with you.'

But it was a very long time before I saw Padua and the Count again. The war put an end to my yearly visits to Italy, and for various reasons, even when it was over, I could not go south again as soon as I should have liked. Not till the autumn of 1921 did I embark on the Venice express.

It was in an Italy not altogether familiar that I now found myself—an Italy full of violence and bloodshed. The Fascists and the Communists were still busily fighting. Roaring at the head of their dust-storms, the motor lorries loaded with cargoes of singing boys careered across the country in search of adventure and lurking Bolshevism. One stood respectfully in the gutter while they passed; and through the flying dust, through the noise of the engine, a snatch of their singing would be blown back: 'Giovinezza, giovinezza, primavera di bellezza . . .' (Youth, youth, spring-time of beauty). Where but in Italy would they have put such words to a political song? And then the proclamations, the manifestos, the denunciations, the appeals! Every hoarding and blank wall was plastered with them. Between the station and Pedrochi's I walked through a whole library of these things. 'Citizens!' they would begin, 'A heroic wind is to-day reviving the almost asphyxiated soul of our unhappy Italy, overcome by the poisonous fumes of Bolshevism and wallowing in ignoble abasement at the feet of the nations.' And they finished, for the most part, with references to Dante. I read them all with infinite pleasure.

I reached Pedrochi's at last. On the terrace, sitting in the very corner where I had seen him first, years before, was the old Count. He stared at me blankly when I saluted him, not recognising me at all. I began to explain who I was; after a moment he cut me short, almost impatiently, protesting that he remembered now,

perfectly well. I doubted very much whether he really did; but he was too proud to confess that he had forgotten. Meanwhile he invited me to sit at his table.

At a first glance, from a distance, I fancied that the old Count had not aged a day since last I saw him. But I was wrong. From the street I had only seen the rakish tilt of his hat, the bristling of his white moustache and imperial, the parted knees, the noble protrusion of the paunch. But, now that I could look at him closely and at leisure, I saw that he was in fact a very different man. Under the tilted hat his face was unhealthily purple; the flesh sagged into pouches. In the whites of his eyes, discoloured and as though tarnished with age, the little broken veins showed red. And, lustreless, the eyes themselves seemed to look without interest at what they saw. His shoulders were bent as though under a weight and, when he lifted his cup to his lips, his hand trembled so much that a drop of coffee splashed on to the table. He was an old man now—old and tired.

'How's Fabio?' I asked; since 1916 I had had no news of him.

'Oh, Fabio's well,' the old Count answered. 'Fabio's very well. He has six children now, you know.' And the old gentleman nodded and smiled at me without a trace of malice. He seemed quite to have forgotten the reasons for which he had been at so much pains to select a good Catholic for a daughter-in-law. 'Six!' he repeated. 'And then, you know, he did very well in the war. We Tirabassi have always been warriors.' Full of pride, he went on to tell me of Fabio's exploits and sufferings—twice wounded, special promotion on the field of battle, splendid decorations. He was a major now.

'And do his military duties still keep him in Padua?'

The old gentleman nodded, and suddenly there appeared on his face something like the old smile. 'A little *combinazione* of mine,' he said, and chuckled.

'And the estate?' I asked.

Oh, that was doing all right, everything considered. It had got rather out of hand during the war, while Fabio was at the front. And then, afterwards, there had been a lot of trouble with the peasants; but Fabio and his fascists were putting all that to rights. 'With Fabio on the spot,' said the old gentleman, 'I have no anxieties.' And then he began to tell me, all over again, about Fabio's exploits in the war.

The next day I took the tram to Strà, and after an hour agreeably spent in the villa and the park I walked on at my leisure towards Dolo. It took me a long time to get there, for on this occasion I was able to stop and look for as long as I liked at all the charming things on the way. Casanova seemed, now, a good deal less enviable, I noticed, looking inwards on myself, than he had when last I passed this way. I was nine years older.

The gates were open; I walked in. There stood the house, as grave and ponderous as ever, but shabbier than when I saw it last. The shutters needed painting, and here and there the stucco was peeling off in scabs. I approached. From within the house came a cheerful noise of children's laughter and shouting. The family, I supposed, was playing hide-and-seek, or trains, or perhaps some topical game of fascists and communists. As I climbed the steps of the porch I could hear the sound of small feet racing over the tiled floors; in the empty rooms footsteps and shouting strangely echoed. And then suddenly, from the sitting-room on the right, came the sound of Fabio's voice, furiously shouting. 'Oh, for God's sake,' it yelled, 'keep those wretched children quiet!' And then, petulantly, it complained, 'How do you expect me to do accounts with this sort of thing going on?' There was at once a profound and, as it were, unnatural silence; then the sound of small feet tiptoeing away, some whispering, a little nervous laugh. I rang the bell.

It was the Countess who opened the door. She stood for a moment hesitatingly, wondering who I was; then remembered, smiled, held out her hand. She had grown, I noticed, very thin, and, with the wasting of her face, her eyes seemed to have become larger. Their expression was as gentle and serene as ever; she seemed to be looking at me from a distance.

'Fabio will be delighted to see you,' she said, and she took me through the door on the right of the porch straight into the sitting-room. Fabio was sitting at the Palladian table in front of a heap of papers, biting the end of his pencil.

Even in his grey-green service uniform the young Count looked wonderfully brilliant, like a soldier on the stage. His face was still boyishly freckled, but the skin was deeply lined; he looked very much older than when I had seen him last—older than he really was. The open cheerfulness, the shining lamp-like brightness were gone. On his snubby-featured face he wore a ludicrously incongruous expression of chronic melancholy. He

brightened, it is true, for a moment when I appeared ; I think he was genuinely glad to see me.

'*Caspita !*' he kept repeating, '*caspita !*' (It was his favourite expression of astonishment, an odd old-fashioned word.) 'Who would have thought it ? After all this time !'

'And all the eternity of the war as well,' I said.

But when the first ebullition of surprise and pleasure subsided, the look of melancholy came back.

'It gives me the spleen,' he said, 'to see you again ; still travelling about ; free to go where you like. If you knew what life was like here . . .'

'Well, in any case,' I said, feeling that I ought, for the Countess's sake, to make some sort of protest—'in any case, the war's over, and you have escaped a real revolution. That's something.'

'Oh, you're as bad as Laura,' said the Count impatiently. He looked towards his wife, as though hoping that she would say something. But the Countess went on with her sewing, without even looking up. The Count took my arm. 'Come along,' he said, and his tone was almost one of anger. 'Let's take a turn outside.' His wife's religious resignation, her patience, her serenity angered him, I could see, like a reprimand—tacit, indeed, and unintentionally given, but none the less galling.

Along the weed-grown paths of what had once, in the ancient days of splendour, been the garden, slowly we walked towards the farm. A few ragged box-trees grew along the fringes of the paths ; once there had been neat hedges. Poised over a dry basin, a Triton blew his waterless conch. At the end of the vista a pair of rapes—Pluto and Proserpine, Apollo and Daphne—writhed desperately against the sky.

'I saw your father yesterday,' I said. 'He looks aged.'

'And so he ought,' said Fabio murderously. 'He's sixty-nine.'

I felt uncomfortably that the subject had become too serious for light conversation. I had wanted to ask after the *colombella* ; in the circumstances, I decided that it would be wiser to say nothing about her. I repressed my curiosity. We were walking now under the lee of the farm buildings.

'The cows look very healthy,' I said politely, looking through an open doorway. In the twilight within, six grey rumps plastered with dry dung presented themselves in file ; six long leather tails

swished impatiently from side to side. Fabio made no comment; he only grunted.

'In any case,' he went on slowly, after another silence, 'he can't live much longer. I shall sell my share and clear off to South America, family or no family.' It was a threat against his own destiny of which he must have known the vanity. He was deceiving himself to keep up his spirits.

'But I say,' I exclaimed, taking another and better opportunity to change the conversation, 'I see you have started a factory here after all.' We had walked round to the farther side of the square. Through the windows of the long low building which, at my last visit, had stood untenanted I saw the complicated shapes of machines—rows of them in a double line down the whole length of the building. 'Looms? Then you decided against cheese? And the frescoes?' I turned questioningly towards the Count. I had a horrible fear that, when we got back to the house, I should find the great hall peeled of its Veroneses, and a blank of plaster where once had been the history of Eros and Psyche.

'Oh! the frescoes are still there, what's left of them.' And, in spite of Fabio's long face, I was delighted at the news. 'I persuaded my father to sell some of his house property in Padua, and we started this weaving business here two years ago. Just in time,' Fabio added, 'for the Communist revolution.'

Poor Fabio! He had no luck. The peasants had seized his factory and had tried to possess themselves of his land. For three weeks he had lived at the villa in a state of siege, defending the place, with twenty Fascists to help him, against all the peasants of the countryside. The danger was over now; but the machines were broken, and in any case it was out of the question to start them again; feeling was still too high. And what, for Fabio, made it worse was the fact that his brother Lucio, who had also got a little capital out of the old man, had gone off to Bulgaria and invested it in a bootlace factory. It was the only bootlace factory in the country, and Lucio was making money hand over fist. Free as air he was, well off, with a lovely Turkish girl for a mistress. For Fabio, the Turkish girl was evidently the last straw. 'Una Turca, una vera Turca,' he repeated, shaking his head. The female infidel symbolised in his eyes all that was exotic, irregular, undomestic; all that was not the family; all that was remote from Padua and the estate.

'And they were such beautiful machines,' said Fabio, pausing for a moment to look in at the last of the long line of windows. 'Whether to sell them, whether to wait till all this has blown over and have them put right and try to start again—I don't know.' He shrugged his shoulders hopelessly. 'Or just let things slide till the old man dies.' We turned the corner of the square and began to walk back towards the house. 'Sometimes,' he added after a silence, 'I don't believe he ever will die.'

The children were playing in the great hall of the Veroneses. The majestic double doors which gave on to the portico were ajar; through the opening we watched them for a moment without being seen. The family was formed up in order of battle. A red-headed boy of ten or eleven led the van, a brown boy followed. Then came three little girls, diminishing regularly in size like graded pearls; and finally a little toddling creature in blue linen crawlers. All six of them carried shouldered bamboos, and they were singing in ragged unison to a kind of trumpet call of three notes—'All' armi i Fascisti; a morte i Comunisti; a basso i Socialisti!'—over and over again. And as they sang they marched, round and round, earnestly, indefatigably. The huge empty room echoed like a swimming-bath. Remote under their triumphal arches, in their serene world of fantastic beauty, the silken ladies and gentlemen played their music, drank their wine; the poet declaimed, the painter poised his brush before the canvas; the monkeys clambered among the Roman ruins, the parrots dozed on the balustrades. 'All' armi i Fascisti, a morte i Comunisti . . . ' I should have liked to stand there in silence, merely to see how long the children would continue their patriotic march. But Fabio had none of my scientific curiosity; or, if he ever had, it had certainly been exhausted long before the last of his children was born. After indulging me for a moment with the spectacle he pushed open the door and walked in. The children looked round and were immediately silent. What with his bad temper and his theory of education by teasing, they seemed to be thoroughly frightened of their father.

'Go on,' he said, 'go on!' But they wouldn't; they obviously couldn't in his terrifying presence. Unobtrusively, they slipped away.

Fabio led me round the painted room. 'Look here,' he said. 'And look here.' In one of the walls of the great hall there were half a dozen bullet holes. A chip had been taken off one of the

painted cornices; one lady was horribly wounded in the face; there were two or three holes on the landscape, and a monkey's tail was severed. 'That's our friends the peasants,' Fabio explained.

In the Carpioni rooms all was still well; the satyrs still pursued their nymphs, and in the room of the centaurs and the mermaids, the men who were half horses still galloped as tumultuously as ever into the sea, to ravish the women who were half fish. But the tale of Eros and Psyche had suffered dreadfully. The exquisite panel in which Tiepolo had painted Psyche holding up the lamp to look at her mysterious lover was no more than a faint mildewy smudge. And where once the indignant young god had flown upwards to rejoin his Olympian relatives (who still, fortunately, swam about intact among the clouds on the ceiling) there was nothing but the palest ghost of an ascending Cupid, while Psyche weeping on the earth below was now quite invisible.

'That's our friends the French,' said Fabio. 'They were quartered here in 1918, and they didn't trouble to shut the windows when it rained.'

Poor Fabio! Everything was against him. I had no consolation to offer. That autumn I sent him an art critic and three more Americans. But nothing came of their visits. The fact was that he had too much to offer. A picture—that might easily have been disposed of. But what could one do with a whole houseful of paintings like this?

The months passed. About Easter time of the next year I had another letter from Fabio. The olive crop had been poor. The Countess was expecting another baby and was far from well. The two eldest children were down with measles, and the last but one had what the Italians call an 'asinine cough.' He expected all the children to catch both diseases in due course. He was very doubtful now if it would ever be worth while to restart his looms. The position of the silk trade was not so sound as it had been at the end of 1919. If only he had stuck to cheese as he first intended! Lucio had just made fifty thousand lire by a lucky stroke of speculation. But the female infidel had run off with a Rumanian. The old Count was ageing rapidly; when Fabio saw him last, he had told the same anecdote three times in the space of ten minutes. With these two pieces of good news—they were for him, I imagine, the only bright spots in the surrounding gloom—Fabio closed his letter. I was left wondering

why he troubled to write to me at all. It may be that he got a certain lacerating satisfaction by thus enumerating his troubles.

That August there was a musical festival in Salzburg. I had never been in Austria; the occasion seemed to me a good one. I went, and I enjoyed myself prodigiously. Salzburg, at the moment, is all in the movement. There are baroque churches in abundance; there are Italianate fountains; there are gardens and palaces that mimic, in their extravagantly ponderous Teutonic way, the gardens and palaces of Rome. And—choicest treasure of all!—there is a tunnel forty feet high bored through a precipitous crag—a tunnel such as only a Prince Bishop of the seventeenth century could have dreamed of, having at either end an arch of triumph, with pilasters, broken pediments, statues, scutcheons all carved out of the living rock. A masterpiece among tunnels, and in a town where everything, without being really good, is exquisitely 'amusing,' the most amusing feature of all. Ah, decidedly, Salzburg is in the movement.

One afternoon I took the funicular up to the castle. There is a beer terrace under the walls of the fortress from which you get a view that is starred in Baedeker. Below you on one side lies the town, spread out in the curving valley, with a river running through it, like a small and German version of Florence. From the other side of the terrace you look out over a panorama that makes no pretence to Italianism; it is as sweetly and romantically German as an air out of Weber's 'Freischütz.' There are mountains on the horizon, spiky and blue, like mountains in a picture-book; and in the foreground, extending to the very foot of the extremely improbable crag on which the castle and the beer garden are perched, stretches a flat green plain—miles upon miles of juicy meadows dotted with minusculous cows, with here and there a neat toy farm or, more rarely, a cluster of dolls' houses with a spire going up glittering from the midst of them.

I was sitting with my blond beer in front of this delicious and slightly comical landscape, thinking comfortably of nothing in particular, when I heard behind me a rapturous voice exclaiming 'Bello, bello!' I looked round curiously—for it seemed to me somehow rather surprising to hear Italian spoken here—and saw one of those fine sumptuous women they admire so much in the South. She was a *bella grassa*, plump to the verge of over-ripeness and perilously near middle age; but still, in her way, exceedingly handsome. Her face had the proportions of an ice-

berg—one-fifth above water, four-fifths below. Ample and florid from the eyes downwards, it was almost foreheadless; the hair began immediately above the brows. The eyes themselves were dark, large, and—for my taste, at least—somewhat excessively tender in expression. I took her in in a moment and was about to look away again when her companion, who had been looking at the view on the other side, turned round. It was the old Count.

I was far more embarrassed, I believe, than he. I felt myself blushing, as our eyes met, as though it were I who had been travelling about the world with a *colombella* and he who had caught me in the act. I did not know what to do—whether to smile and speak to him; or to turn away as though I had not recognised him; or to nod from a distance and then, discreetly, to disappear. But the old Count put an end to my irresolution by calling out my name in astonishment, by running up to me and seizing my hand. What a delight to see an old friend! Here, of all places! In this God-forsaken country—though it was cheap enough, didn't I find? He would introduce me to a charming compatriot of his own, an Italian lady he had met yesterday in the train from Vienna.

I was made known to the *colombella*, and we all sat down at my table. Speaking resolutely in Italian, the Count ordered two more beers. We talked. Or, rather, the Count talked; for the conversation was a monologue. He told us anecdotes of the Italy of fifty years ago; he gave us imitations of the queer characters he had known; he even, at one moment, imitated the braying of an ass—I forget in what context, but the braying remains vividly in my memory. Snuffing the air between every sentence, he gave us his views on women. The *colombella* screamed indignant protests, dissolved herself in laughter. The old Count twisted his moustaches, twinkling at her through the network of his wrinkles. Every now and then he turned in my direction and gave me a little wink.

I listened in astonishment. Was this the man who had told the same anecdote three times in ten minutes? I looked at the old Count. He was leaning towards the *colombella* whispering something in her ear which made her laugh so much that she had to wipe the tears from her eyes. Turning away from her, he caught my eye; smiling, he shrugged his shoulders as though to say 'These women! What imbeciles, but how delicious, how

indispensable!' Was this the tired old man I had seen a year ago sitting on Pedrochi's terrace? It seemed incredible.

'Well, good-bye—*a rivederci*.' They had to get down into the town again. The funicular was waiting.

'I'm delighted to have seen you,' said the old Count, shaking me affectionately by the hand.

'And so am I,' I protested. 'Particularly delighted to see you so well.'

'Yes, I'm wonderfully well, now,' he said, blowing out his chest.

'And young,' I went on. 'Younger than I am! How have you done it?'

'Aha!' The old Count cocked his head on one side mysteriously.

More in joke than in earnest, 'I believe you've been seeing Steinach in Vienna,' I said. 'Having a rejuvenating operation.'

For all reply, the old Count raised the forefinger of his right hand, laying it first to his lips, then along the side of his nose, and winking as he did so. Then clenching his fist, and with his thumb sticking rigidly up, he made a complicated gesture which would, I am sure, for an Italian, have been full of a profound and vital significance. To me, however, unfamiliar with the language of signs, the exact meaning was not entirely clear. But the Count offered no verbal explanation. Still without uttering a word, he raised his hat; then, laying his finger once more to his lips, he turned and ran with an astonishing agility down the steep path towards the little carriage of the funicular, in which the *colombella* had already taken her seat.

ALDOUS HUXLEY.

SOME EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LETTERS.

BY LORD LATYMER.

THERE were many great letter-writers in the eighteenth century. Most well-bred men and women practised letter-writing as an art, and assuaged their *cacoethes scribendi* by sending polished epistles, of a literary or amatory flavour, to their chosen friends. Yet very few of those about the Court of Queen Anne or the early Georges ever read a book. In fact, it was considered very like bad manners to do so, and books were banished from most polite drawing-rooms. There was plenty of robust, witty conversation; a deal of card-playing, swearing and gambling; but the average noble man or woman read about as much as a healthy school-boy of to-day, left to his own devices, will read in his summer holidays.

Out of the womb of Tudor England our own body politic and social was born. The Stuarts tried to throttle it in its cradle, but it survived the perils of infancy, and by the time George I came over from Hanover it was a lusty growing child, with the robust faults and virtues of childhood.

If you are curious to enjoy its childish prattle, its naughty stories, its frankly natural humour, its deep wisdom, and its utter lack of self-consciousness, you can hear the very echoes of its voice in the many letters which have come down to us—not so much in the formal, artificial correspondence of the wits, as in the everyday epistles of friends and acquaintances.

You must not be over-squeamish. Thackeray writes: 'You could no more suffer in a British drawing-room, under the reign of Queen Victoria, a fine gentleman or fine lady of Queen Anne's time, or hear what they heard and said, than you would receive an ancient Briton.'

I think we have lost some of this mid-Victorian prudery—at any rate, I hope so. In its mental habit the twentieth century is more natural, less hypocritical, than the nineteenth, and better able to understand and sympathise with the eighteenth. Victorian 'delicacy' was a fearful thing. I should not expect to be reduced to blushes and confusion by those formidable savages, Queen Anne's courtiers. I should hear ladies talking rather more freely of themselves and their health than is now customary; I should hear

gentlemen swearing rather more copiously than they do now, and occasionally see them in liquor: that, too, I could endure. The one point I am not sure about is that of cleanliness. They washed very little, those superbly dressed figures. It was thought to be unwholesome, and, as a rule, unnecessary. Yet even in this respect it is possible they were not so black as they are painted. At any rate we know for certain that sea bathing became fashionable two hundred years ago. Here is an extract from a letter of Lord Chesterfield, written at Scarborough in August 1733: 'Bathing in the sea is become the general practice of both sexes.' He goes on to suggest that a new tax should be imposed: 'As the Kings of England have always been allowed to be masters of the seas, every person so bathing shall be gauged, and pay so much per foot square as their cubical bulk amounts to.' He further recommends his idea by saying that this tax being singly upon water, it is evident it would be an ease to the landed interest! Moreover, the fashionable world bathed at the spa—at Bath and other places. Lord Chesterfield writes from Bath, November 14, 1737, that a certain Mrs. Buckley was taking her bath 'as she thought in perfect security, when of a sudden Her Grace (the Duchess of Norfolk) who is considerably increased in bulk . . . came, and, like the great leviathan, raised the waters so high that Mrs. Buckley's guide was obliged to hold her up in her arms to save her from drowning'!

Nevertheless, it is to be feared that in the elaborate account we have from Mrs. Masham, through Dr. Arbuthnot, of the ceremonial with which Queen Anne was roused out of bed in the morning, there is nothing about a bath. 'When the queen washed her hands, the page of the back stairs brought and set down upon a side table the basin and ewer; then the bedchamber woman'—please note that she is quite different from the bedchamber lady—'the bedchamber woman set it before the queen and knelt on the other side of the table over against the queen, the bedchamber lady only looking on. The bedchamber woman poured the water out of the ewer upon the queen's hands.' It certainly appears probable that Queen Anne's morning ablutions began and ended with this basin and ewer.

One gets an extraordinary sense of nearness, somehow, in turning over the pages of these two-hundred-year-old letters. It produces in me the same sensation as if I saw my own face in a slightly untrue mirror. It is the same face, but there is an unaccustomed and whimsical distortion which makes one smile a little, or perhaps

sigh a little. Nothing is quite the same, yet everything is there; the features are your own—there is no radical difference.

Let me take you more or less at random through one such collection—letters written mostly to, and some by, Lady Suffolk, who, as Mrs. Howard, was for many years bedchamber woman to Princess Caroline when George I was alive, and Mistress of the Robes when the Princess became a queen and she herself became Lady Suffolk. The letters were collected and published in book form in 1823 by Croker, the well-known politician and writer. Thackeray delved in this quarry, and the materials of his essay on George II were largely taken therefrom. Green, in his 'Short History,' shows that he has at least glanced at the Suffolk letters, and, *sicut suis est mos*, amusingly misquotes a line of Dean Swift's about Sir Robert Walpole, part of some bitter verses which Croker discovered written in Swift's own handwriting.

' 'Tis the cur-dog of Britain and spaniel of Spain '

is transmuted by Green into

' The cur-dog of England and spaniel of France.'

Luckily Green's fame as an historian does not rest upon his meticulous accuracy in minor details.

But the quarry, though opened out, and no doubt well known to many, still contains a plenty of good material. I like the letters of the Princess's maids of honour as well as any. They were gay, high-spirited young savages, not particularly well behaved, even insolent at times. But Molly Lepel—Lady Hervey—was a dear; Mary Bellenden a delightful, naughty girl, who loved to shock any bodies capable of being shocked—there were not so many then as there are now—but able to take very good care of herself. Then there is poor Sophia Howe, whom Croker designates, perhaps justly, as a 'giddy young woman.' Others flit in and out of the yellow old letters, but enough of the actual correspondence of these three is left to bring them up alive before you.

Mary Bellenden in 1720 secretly married one of the grooms of the bedchamber, Colonel John Campbell, a kinsman of the Duke of Argyll. She left the Prince's Court, and her husband appears to have been temporarily out of favour, but was restored to his old position when George II came to the throne. The first letter from her to Mrs. Howard is written at Bath in 1720, apparently before her marriage, or at any rate before it had been

published. The wit in it is distinctly broad; she appears to have been getting into debt, and compares her bills to all sorts of strange things. She says she must send Mrs. Howard a letter of attorney to enable her (Mrs. Howard) to dispose of her goods before she can leave Bath. 'My dear Howard,' she ends up, 'God bless you and send health and liberty. Don't show this, I charge you at your peril.' What was the liberty she prayed for—her own or Mrs. Howard's?

The next letter is from Richmond in the same year. Her marriage has by now been made public, and apparently she and her husband are gambling in stocks and shares; the South Sea Company mania was at its height in 1720. She writes of Colonel Campbell: 'He bows to no altars than those erected in 'Change-alley . . . the fall of stocks has given me a large field to amplify upon.'

In another letter of this year she recommends a young relation of hers to Mrs. Howard's 'good will and protection.' She hopes that Mrs. Howard will 'put her a little in the way of behaving before the Princess, such as not turning her back; and one thing runs mightily in my head, which is crossing her arms, as I did to the Prince, and told him I was not cold but I liked to stand so.' She could look after herself, you see, even when the Prince showed an oncoming disposition. Croker tells a tale of how 'one evening sitting by her His Royal Highness took out a purse and began counting his money' (an unpleasing habit of George II, who was of a thrifty disposition). 'Miss Bellenden either took this for an insulting mode of courtship or she was really wearied and lost her patience, and by a very sudden motion sent His Royal Highness's guineas rolling about the floor, and while he was gathering them up ran out of the room.' George II must have been intensely irritating to live with, his little ways were so unpleasant.

'Now, dear creature, write to me and send me some news, that I may make some figure in the country. . . . The bell rings for dinner: adieu, my dear Swiss.' Mrs. Howard was nicknamed 'The Swiss'—because of her cautious neutrality in Court quarrels?

She writes again from Knowle, October 12, 1721: 'I suppose you have seen my John, who will tell you I have had a sore mouth and have been almost afraid of a cancer. I think I am a little better, but not quite well, and now am in dread of the plague. I wish we were all in the Swiss Cantons again.' She means Mrs. Howard's rooms.

It is difficult in these days to realise the helplessness of the eighteenth century in the presence of disease. Many doctors were nothing but quacks: the best of them knew very little. Laudanum was extensively used as the only pain-killer; bleeding was the common remedy, as Besant remarks, 'for a fever, for a fit, for a drunken stupor, or for a girl's attack of melancholy.' I think that if one of us could be transported two hundred years backwards by Mr. Wells' time-machine, a thing that would strike us most forcibly would be the appalling amount of preventible and curable illness and disease.

'Coombank, April 29, 1722.

'This does not come to draw dear Mrs. Howard in for an answer, but to assure you of the concern I have for your health and welfare. I plainly perceive you were much in the vapours when you wrote to me: I partly guess the cause of your manner of writing. I should be glad to be mistaken; but I was told before I left London that somebody, who shall be nameless, was grown sour and cross, and not so good to you as usual.'

Croker says that 'somebody' is no doubt the Prince. But it might just as well be the Princess. Horace Walpole more than hints that Mrs. Howard had a liaison with the Prince, and Croker warmly defends her against the accusation. Walpole was always a scandal-monger, and the evidence is all against him. Her first husband appears to have alternately neglected and bullied her, to the encouragement of the scandalous, but if ever there was a sweet, pure, reasonable soul, it was Mary Bellenden's 'dear Swiss.'

April 10, 1723, is dated on a letter from Coombank which Thackeray quotes extensively in 'The Four Georges,' but, in deference to mid-Victorian susceptibilities, leaves out the most amusing part of it. Croker's note is to the effect that 'matrimony had not, it seems, amended Mary Bellenden's *étourderie*.'

Of Lady Hervey's letters over a dozen are preserved. They are better written than Mrs. Campbell's, and contain a good deal of quiet humour. Here is a description of a well-known nobleman at Bath in 1725:

'Lord Peterborough is here and has been so some time, though by his dress one would believe he had not designed to make any stay, for he wears boots all day and, as I hear, must do so, having brought no shoes with him. It is a comical sight to see him with

his blue ribbon and star and a cabbage under each arm, or a chicken in his hand, which, after he himself has purchased at market, he carries home for his dinner.'

In another letter from Bath :

'All I have yet told you is very probable and will not surprise you ; but arm yourself with faith to believe me when I tell you that Bab, our own lean, pale-faced Bab, has been queen of a ball, and has been the object of sighs, languishments and all things proper on such occasions ; and to surprise you yet more, I must inform you that her flirt is master of ten thousand pounds a year.'

Bab was her sister-in-law, but the 'flirt' cannot have come up to the scratch, as the lady died unmarried.

In 1727 George II ascended the throne. Here is a curious picture of a 'rag' by Queen Caroline's maids of honour, from Lady Hervey's pen.

July 7, 1729.

'I am not at all surprised to hear that the maids of honour have suffered by the inclemency of the weather : people who are so frolicsome as to expose themselves to the night air must expect to suffer by it ; but I think people who are of such very hot constitutions as to want to be refreshed by night walking need not disturb others who are not altogether so warm. . . . As for Mrs. M. it is a sad pity that all this time nobody has had the charity to find her better employment in the night than to fling people's windows open five or six times. Mrs. D. I am apt to believe will repent of her part of this pretty recreation ; her aunt will inform her to some purpose of the . . . indecency of being at such an hour in the garden, where it was supposed they hoped to find better entertainment than opening and rattling at windows. . . . Poor old M. should now take more care of herself, not being able as formerly to go through such expeditions. It is really very well that others had more good nature than these fine ladies and could prevail on themselves not to tell the queen of this.'

No doubt there would have been no end of a rumpus if Queen Caroline had heard of the 'rag.' Mrs. M. is Miss Meadows, now the senior of the maids, usually a grave person and looked on as rather a kill-joy by her younger companions.

Pope's lines in answer to a question of Miss Howe's—pity, poor lady, that she could not answer it better herself!—are well known.

'What is Prudery ? 'Tis a beldam
Seen with wit and beauty seldom.
'Tis a fear that starts at shadows,
'Tis (no, 'tisn't) like Miss Meadows.
'Tis a virgin hard of feature,
Old and void of all good nature ;
Lean and fretful ; would seem wise,
Yet plays the fool before she dies.
'Tis an ugly, envious shrew
That rails at dear Lepell and you.'

There are two letters of Miss Howe's from her father's house near Farnham. One begins : ' You will think, I suppose, that I have had no flirtation since I am here, but you will be mistaken.' She describes an offer of matrimony she has had from ' a country clown,' and says that she is half resolved not to return to the Court, ' but follow his advice in taking up with a harmless, innocent, and honest livelihood, in a warm cottage ; but for fear I should be tempted too far, put my Lord Lumley in mind to send the coach for me on Tuesday se'nnight.'

She was chidden for laughing in church by the Duchess of St. Albans, who said to her that she could not do a worse thing. ' I beg Your Grace's pardon, I can do a great many worse things,' was the reply.

In the second letter she wishes Mrs. Howard to excuse her to the Princess for not returning to Court, as her grandmother is dead. She does not write nicely about it ; regards her enforced stay with her mother as an unmitigated nuisance, and counts the days till Lord Lumley sends the coach to Godalming for her. Lumley was the Prince's Master of the Horse. ' Next Wednesday the coach must come, or I die.' Her mother wishes her to stay a little longer, but the maid, after sneering at that lady's mourning dress, writes : ' I have told mamma that Lumley *must* send the coach a good while before the birthday' (King's or Prince's ?), ' because the men must all be in town to have new liveries made ; so let somebody write me a letter that he is very sorry it must be so, but that it is absolutely necessary.'

One is a little reminded of another heartless damsel—a greater than Miss Howe. I mean Miss Beatrix Esmond.

These letters were written in 1718 or 1719. A short while afterwards this thoughtless maid followed in the footsteps of the young lady of Joppa (who came a society cropper). The affair

was celebrated in verse—everything was celebrated in good, bad, or indifferent verse in those days—by Sir Charles Hanbury Williams.

' At Leicester House her passion first began,
And Nunty Lowther was a proper man,
But when the Princess did to Kew remove,
She could not bear the absence of her love,
But flew away. . . . '

She died, poor soul, in 1726, with 'a blemished reputation and a broken heart,' according to Croker. She may have been like Beatrix Esmond in her selfishness and duplicity, but was of a feebler courage, and could find no Tom Tusher to pull her out of the quagmire into which she had strayed.

We have had one or two Stock Exchange 'booms' in our own time, but I suppose that there has never been quite such a universal madness for gambling in stocks and shares as that which possessed everyone in 1720. Like many other fashions, it came to us from France, where John Law, the king of company promoters, had become the greatest man in Europe. In 1719 his famous Mississippi Bonds were selling at sixty times their price of issue, and shares in the daughter companies were wildly swallowed up by an infatuated public. There is no letter written during these two years which does not contain some reference to the ruling craze. Mrs. Howard did not escape. The Earl of Islay writes from Paris in September 1719: 'I have laid out the money you bid me. . . . Cousin Jack has got, I believe, near £10,000, and has lost the half of that sum by a timorous silly bargain he made.' This was Colonel John Campbell, who was, as we have already learned from his wife's letter, a worshipper in 'Change Alley. 'The stocks are now at 950,' the Earl continues, 'and if no accidents happen it is probable they will be 1500 in a short time.' O wondrous probability! Was there ever a gambler who was not on the verge of a vast fortune?

'The money I laid out for you was 5000 livres . . . the first payment of 50,000 livres. The subscription was full, but Mr. Law was so kind as to allow it me. Some of the subscribers have already sold their subscriptions for 230; that is, their own money back again and 130 per cent. profit.'

'Paris, January 16, 1720' (also from this same Earl):

'Your money matters go very well, though the "actions" (Mississippi Bonds) are fallen from 1900 to 1750 ; yet the meaning of it is nothing else but people's selling their "actions" in order to buy the new primes (as they are called).'

But the inevitable slump was very near, and it is to be feared that both His Lordship and those in England for whom he was acting lost most, if not all, of their money. There is evidence in these letters of Lord Islay's that he was acting as go-between with John Law for a very exalted person, even the Prince of Wales himself. He is careful what he puts on paper about it, in writing to Mrs. Howard ; but he knew, and she knew, and each knew that the other knew. Exactly what was done one cannot make out, but it would seem as if the Prince had employed someone else besides Lord Islay to visit Mr. Law, and that each emissary had supposed he was the only one—with some resulting annoyance to all the parties concerned. The Prince seems to have had a keen nose for a cheap Stock, and later on made £40,000 in 'Change Alley, before the bursting of the Bubble—to Walpole's very great disgust, and he was not precisely a squeamish man.

Mrs. Howard, by June 1720, had probably given up her French investments as bad debts, but was making an attempt, which was at first successful, to get the money back again in 'Change Alley. In that month the Hon. Mrs. Molesworth writes :

'I hope I need not tell you, my dear Mrs. Howard, that I heartily rejoice at your success in the South Sea. . . . To tell you the truth, I am almost South Sea mad . . . and I cannot, without great regret, reflect that for want of a little money I am forced to let slip an opportunity which is never like to happen again.'

What almost terrifying simplicity ! Yet how often has one heard, or given way to, the same expression of feeling. 'The chance is too good to lose ; pledge your credit, borrow from your friends, resort to any dubious trick that may raise the wind, in order to take advantage of the opportunity that the kind Mr. Law, or the philanthropic Mr. Whitaker-Wright, or any other dazzling money-spinner, puts in your way. It's foolish *not* to do so ; to-morrow will be too late. Hurry, hurry to get rich quickly, at no matter whose expense, without labour and without pains.'

By October 1720 the financial earthquake had begun in England, and was in full blast in France. Lady Lansdowne writes from Paris : 'We are told here you are altogether by the ears and that there are terrible commotions in Exchange Alley.' By now

John Law was a fallen idol, and in December 1720 fled from France for his life, a broken, penniless refugee. He arrived in England in October 1721, and was well received—or at least not further persecuted, save in the trifling matter of a half-forgotten manslaughter which he had committed many years before in Edinburgh. For this he was allowed to plead a pardon in the Court of King's Bench in November 1721—and indeed all he had done was to kill a man in a fair duel.

There is a letter from him to Mrs. Howard, which must have been written in the latter part of 1721.

'Can you not prevail on the Duke to help me something more than the half year? or is there nobody that could have good nature enough to lend me one thousand pounds? I beg that if nothing of this can be done, that it may only be betwixt us two, as I take you as my great friend; and I am very well assured of it by the honour I had done me yesterday at Court by the King. . . . Excuse this, dear Madam, and only put yourself in my place, and know at the same time that you are the only friend I have.'

Poor devil! The only friend he had. One cannot help being sorry for the fallen idol. Two years before, his friendship had been courted by crowned heads, princes, dukes and prelates. His wealth appeared to be illimitable, and he had become the owner of fourteen estates in France, one of which conferred on him the marquissate of Rosny. Humpty-dumpty had a great fall, and the pieces could not be put together again. He left England in 1722, and, after seven restless but despairing years, died at Venice in 1729 in absolute poverty. I am glad to think that kind Mrs. Howard did something to help him. She had lost money by his schemes, and there are not many of us who are not mortally offended by a blow in the pocket.

It is not quite certain how far the Law schemes and the South Sea fiasco were interconnected. Nothing is more catching than this kind of madness, but, apart from psychological considerations, each Government in turn fostered the fever by turning to a commercial company for assistance in financial difficulties.

It has been the fashion for latter-day historians to make a hero of John Law; and to some extent, no doubt, he was disinterested, caring more for the success of his projects than for the money their success brought him. But it is always thus with a financial juggler. He becomes fascinated by the problems he has created, and can no more cease to scheme than a spider can cease

to spin. Law aimed higher than most of his imitators and successors, but the difference is one of degree, not of kind. Able man though he was, it was the brilliance of the charlatan; his head was turned by success; he could not, or would not, consolidate one achievement before leaping forward to the next, and in the end he trod the path of all his brethren.

There is a series of amusing letters from a Mrs. Bradshaw. Thackeray quotes one of them extensively in 'George the Second,' saying that it was written by one of Queen Caroline's maids of honour. Croker, however, says that no precise account of Mrs. Bradshaw can be given, save that she was an old maid, very intimate with Lady Mohun, and some connexion of Mrs. Howard's. 'She seems to have been . . . a person of more gaiety than delicacy. Decency has required the omission of large portions of her letters, which, though very sprightly, are also very gross.'

I think Thackeray must be wrong, as there is nothing whatever in her letters to show that she was a maid of honour. Perhaps the most interesting are those written from Lady Mohun's country seat in Cheshire, giving descriptions of their daily life.

'Cast your eye (in imagination) upon a table covered with good fish and flesh, the product of our own estate; and such ale! —it would make you stare again, Howard. After your health has gone round (which is always the second glass) we begin to grow witty, and really say things that would make your ears tingle. . . . I am now called upon to see a pond drawn, which will produce carp as big as some of your lords of the bedchamber.'

This lady's pen is dipped in mud sometimes.

'We dined last week at Mr. Booth's . . . the Earl and Countess of Warrington met us, which to me spoiled the feast; she is a limber dirty fool, and her consort the stiffest of all stiff things, so that instead of an agreeable freedom . . . it was as solemn as a funeral, and I was chief mourner. They call it six miles from us; I believe it is twelve, and cursed roads, as all Cheshire is. If one could fly in the air it would be a charming country, but since there is no such machine, I would not live here for the king's ransom.'

She seems to have found some diversions in Cheshire, however.

'My Lady and I have our rural pleasures too. The Colonel gave a smock for the young wenches to run for. The pleasure of the day ended with a prison base; all the swains from two neighbouring towns performed feats of activity, and run against one another with little more than a fig-leaf for their clothing, and

we, being in a state of innocence, were not ashamed to show our faces.'

This Lady Mohun was the second wife and widow of the blackguardly Lord Mohun, whom all friends of Harry Esmond know so well. He left her this Cheshire estate, Gosworth, or Gawsworth, Hall, which had been the property of his first wife. It was over this estate that the famous duel took place. 'That ill-omened Mohun,' says the Duke of Hamilton, at the end of that great chapter in which he and Esmond quarrel and make it up again, 'has come, or is coming, to London again. We are in a lawsuit about my late Lord Gerard's property, and he has sent to me to meet him.' The Duke and Lord Mohun had married two sisters, nieces of Lord Gerard, to whom Gosworth Hall had belonged; and on his death both nephews-in-law claimed it on behalf of their respective wives. Apparently the lawsuit was settled in Mohun's widow's favour after Mohun killed the Duke and was killed himself. The widow married again and appears to have been well received in London society. Her letters to Mrs. Howard are commonplace and do not tell one much about her.

There is a long and amatory correspondence between Mrs. Howard and Lord Peterborough. It was all a pretence—a solemn farce of love-making, in which she asked little John Gay, the Court poet, to help her, and made fair copies of her epistles before dispatching them. Peterborough was about seventy years old, but still able to amuse himself with a little witty philandering.

Another old friend of Mrs. Howard's was Dr. Arbuthnot, who had attended Queen Anne—Thackeray's 'Doctor A.'—at the end of her life, and besides being one of the ablest was one of the best-loved men of his time. Everyone has a good word for him; even Swift loved Arbuthnot, and, almost alone of his acquaintance, never fell out with or vilified him. He was a Jacobite, and on George I's accession lost his position as Court Physician; but as years went on, like many another, he gradually was won over to the Whig cause, and in the last years of his life attended various members of the Hanoverian House. He writes from Tunbridge Wells in 1728:

'Her Royal Highness goes on prosperously with the water. I think she is the strongest person in this place, if walking every day as far as would carry her to Seven Oaks be a sign of bodily strength. . . . I tell Her Highness she does more good than the waters; for she keeps some ladies in exercise and breath that

want it. . . . I am only sorry there is no prince in Christendom at present that deserves her.'

This was probably the Princess Anne, George II's eldest daughter.

Arbuthnot gives an account of the death of a boy who was killed by lightning. I do not know if it would satisfy the College of Surgeons now—I suspect not—but it shows a very great difference from the empirical, unscientific methods of many of the physicians of his time.

'If I may be allowed to reason on these appearances, the sudden rarefaction of the air caused the stagnation of blood in the lungs by the want of respiration. The settlement of blood upon his body was occasioned by the repercussion of the air, giving as it were a blow, by returning to restore the equilibrium, just as the windows of neighbouring houses are broken by the blast of a powder-mill; the windows are all bent outward: it is the air within the house which returns to repair the vacuum that produces that effect.'

He may be right or wrong about the windows, but² in any case he attempts to trace effect from cause in understandable terms.

Another letter of his from Tunbridge Wells, written in 1731, congratulates Lady Suffolk (as she had then become) on her new place of Mistress of the Robes, and gives a description of some of the company at the Wells.

'The company consists chiefly of *bon-vivants* with decayed stomachs, green-sickness virgins, unfruitful or miscarrying wives. . . . The medicines I prescribed, when they had done good, were prescribed by the patient to others, and so on, till at last the apothecary made gallons of bitters which they took by drams at the shop, and half pecks of pills which they carried home in boxes. They filled my belly with good dinners at noon, and emptied my pockets at night at quadrille.'

Walpole's age was an age of peace, following an era of civil strife and war; and the sense of peaceful security in which men and women may follow their own bent and develop their own talent—aye, and play the fool in their own way, if so they desire—is, so it seems to me, strongly marked in all the letters of those times. Life was not too strenuous; manners mattered almost as much as morals; if insincerity existed it was so transparent as to be harmless, and one can turn with relief to the pleasant vagaries of a bygone age as an antidote to the stern realities of our own.

WITH THE PEARLERS.

FAR from the beaten tracks of globe-trotters, and unknown even to many adventure-loving wanderers, stretch the great pearling grounds of North-West Australia. Yet this lucrative belt of shallow waters, fringed by its hundreds of miles of sandy beach on the south, and by unexplored mountain ranges known to be rich in gold and other minerals at its northern extremity, is quite easy of access. From Fremantle, the chief port of West Australia, steamers run regularly to Broome, the centre of the pearling industry, and from Singapore there is also a monthly connexion.

This land of ocean treasure, mineral wealth and mystery, was probably first seen by white men when the famous adventurer, Dampier, sailed down its haze-bound coast-line, thinking it was part of Asia; but intelligent Malays and natives of the Philippines say that their ancestors knew of the great *terra incognita* lying to the south of their lands from a time too far back in the misty ages to be fixed. Indeed, we now know that the rock-bound inlets penetrating the coastal spurs of the Leopold Ranges were regular haunts of the Malay pirates of old, and it is said that much treasure looted from Java, India, and China still lies hidden somewhere along the shores of those stormless bays, visited now only by the chance pearling lugger. Sometimes, however, an entire pearling fleet, when caught unawares by the monsoon, seeks shelter in those land-bound waters and passes the season there. On those occasions the lordly master pearlmen spend their time, after repairing their vessels, exploring and prospecting the unknown country beyond, and, if the tales of its mineral wealth be only partly true, there are fortunes there for future generations. Meanwhile, the pearlmen are the lords of their own domain. In their kingdom time passes, and with it, perhaps, empires; but only in the case of a world war does it make any difference to them. Then they answer their call to a man—and the graves of Gallipoli prove that fact.

The foregoing summarises all I knew about pearling and pearlmen when Big Sam and I, after a prospecting trip across comparatively unknown country from Port Darwin on the north, during which we found diamonds, gold, copper, and other minerals, all impossible for two men to work, found ourselves in sight of

the sea on the west. The galvanised iron roofs of houses glistened in the sunlight, and we guessed we were looking at Broome. That guess became a certainty at sundown, when the wind blew inland from the sea; our horses objected to the odoriferous atmosphere, too, but they became used to it sooner than we did. We were certainly nomads, but the call of civilisation sang out loudly in our five senses, so, after shaving at a water-hole and making ourselves look as presentable as possible in our spare Assamese silk garments, which we still carried somehow, we rode into the town after dark. The place was crowded with Chinese, Japanese, Manilamen, and aborigines, but we did not see a single white man. Arriving at what seemed to be the chief hotel in the town, we gave our horses to a Japanese attendant and entered, wondering if we had dropped upon an 'Arabian Nights' country.

The apparent owner was a black-skinned man whose nationality I could not place, but he had a very Scotch name and his language was nearly perfect. And everything else in that hotel was perfect. We had our first iced drinks since leaving Darwin, and presently sat down to a dinner which reminded us of other far-away places.

'Are we dreaming?' Big Sam said, as some edible with a French name, which we had chosen from a typewritten menu without knowing its nature, was placed before us.

'I think we are,' I answered. 'We'll wake up presently and find ourselves back in the desert. We haven't seen a white man——'

'By Christmas! Here's one now,' exclaimed Sam. 'Find out what language he talks.'

A pleasant-faced man entered the room and greeted us courteously. 'I am sorry that none of us were here to meet you,' he said. 'We did not expect the steamer to get in until to-morrow, and most of us are at the Chinese theatre to-night.'

We explained that we had not come by steamer, told him our names and where we had come from, and asked who were 'us.'

The man seemed a bit surprised. I am sure he did not believe we had crossed from Darwin, but he laughed and replied: 'I am afraid you will find "us" a bad lot. We are the master pearlery of Broome; this is our club-house, and you are unanimously elected honorary members—by myself. My name is Chalmers.'

Big Sam was indignant. 'We thought this was an hotel,' he said. 'We are quite able to pay our way anywhere; and all we

want at present is a boat to take us round to some civilised port—'

'Please pardon me if I have said anything to annoy you,' Mr. Chalmers interrupted. 'It is our custom to make things as pleasant as possible for visitors. The hotels in this sultry town-ship are only drinking saloons, frequented by renegade white men and poor beach-combers. There isn't a boat leaving for anywhere inside a month. Ah, here are some of the boys now!'

How things might have developed I do not like to think, for Big Sam was sometimes slow about adapting himself to new conditions when angry. But all became harmony at once when one of the bronze-faced men who entered the dining-room called out to me by an old pet name, and, rushing forward, nearly wrenched my hand off. I recognised him instantly, in spite of his dressy veneer, as an old comrade adventurer in the South Seas—but wanderers hide their feelings.

'Hullo, Bob,' I said. 'You're a bit away from the Samoan Islands?'

'Yes, I had to leave Pago Pago. A native princess there wanted to marry me, and—well, I got away on one of the Spreckel's boats for Sydney, in Handsome Harry's trunk, and now I am a bold bad pearler. . . . This is Handsome Harry, and the others are, as they grip your fist, Charlie Woods, a darned good fellow but nothing else; Tommy Boyd, a man of brains who can't use them; Captain Biddles, the father of the pearling fleet, whose history you can hunt up for yourself; and Andy Macalister, a real good bad man, who says he is Scotch but is not believed.' He turned to his friends. 'Gentlemen pearl-ers,' he said, 'one of those two hard-faced specimens of humanity whose hands you have just shaken is the man who [not wise to say what followed], and if his mate is as hard a case as himself we poor pearl-ers are in for a hustling time.'

Big Sam modestly ventured to say that neither of us was really a hard case, but the laugh which followed equalised everything—and dinner was begun over again. Our new friends were strict prohibitionists—for the Manilamen, Chinese, Japanese, and aborigines, but not for themselves—and, as other master pearl-ers came into the club when tired of the Chinese performance, and Sam and I found more old friends in some of them, it was early in the morning before the party broke up. No white man sleeps inside walls in Broome, and the mosquitoes see that they

cannot sleep outside, in the town; so all walked out along the jetty and made its sea end their resting-place. We were informed that the pearling schooners lying near would have been more comfortable, but, as the sharks were unusually hungry, and no niggers could be found at that hour to accompany us to satisfy that appetite—a shark prefers black men to white, the latter being too salty for his taste!—and that, anyhow, as sunrise and another day would arrive soon, it wasn't worth the risk swimming out to them.

Sam and I agreed; we were not used to sharks, but we were certainly experts in the art of sleeping where night found us.

In the morning the scorching sun awoke us, and at once every man was in the sea. It was glorious! Sam and I had not experienced the delights of a swim in salt water for a long time.

After breakfast in the club-house we were taken round to see the sights. The cable station—Broome is the landing station of the Australian cable system—and the strongly-built prison were deemed to be the chief attractions, and we were told that the latter was easily the most comfortable place in town and, therefore, always well filled. I don't think the Malays, Chinese, and coolies whom we saw in chains inside were extremely happy, all the same; but as it was their custom to run 'amok' and murder each other on their respective festival nights, perhaps the prison did exercise a soothing influence! Incidentally, it may be said that some of the various races of mankind which compose the Broome pearling fleet have a festival every night when on shore, but the death-roll is never known, as the white troopers do not interfere in their pleasures unless they disturb the peace of the town proper.

When we saw through the town and the various outlying native quarters, we were taken to the pearl-opening sheds along the beach. We might have been led there first, but all our guides agreed that the wind was not favourable. I think the sense of smell is not always an advantage! The sheds consisted of long lines of inclined tables with a receptacle ledge at the lower side containing water. Chinese attendants were piling up a cargo of shells just landed on the higher side of some of the tables, but a few other tables were in a further advanced stage, as the smell testified, and we were informed that the oysters on the latter tables were in course of 'spitting' their pearls—if they contained any.

'It's a better game than mining,' Big Sam commented, after

we had been told that all the shells were placed on the tables, when landed, and, after spitting of their own accord in a few days, were cleaned by the workers and stored for shipment to Singapore, where they were sold at prices ranging round £200 per ton.

'Only that, for pearls?' exclaimed Sam, who sometimes really was obtuse.

'No; for the shells,' someone explained. 'The pearls are often worth hundreds of pounds each. Biddles got the Southern Cross pearl, by some stroke of luck, and it was sold last, I believe, for forty thousand pounds. Of course, it was a freak pearl, and I think the Pope now owns it.'

'I fancy I should give most of my time to the pearls,' observed Sam, and all laughed.

'We all thought that at one time or other,' said Chalmers; 'but a white man simply can't stick it. The smell makes you think you've got every disease ever invented, and no fellow-being will come near you. Macalister once tried to collect his own pearls by soaking himself in whisky, and Charlie Gordon tried the same game after inoculating himself with every patent medicine advertised in the Perth papers. Both went to hospital, and the Chinese cleaners still get most of the pearls.'

Big Sam was still eager for knowledge which he ought to have acquired already. 'But why do you allow the Chinese to steal your pearls?' he asked.

'We don't,' Captain Biddles answered. 'They swallow them, and a Chinaman's anatomy is different from ours——'

'Some of the Chinamen storekeepers in town are millionaires,' added my old comrade, Boston Bob, who was now supposed to be respectable and was known as Robert Cairns. 'They buy all the stolen pearls and send them home to China in the coffins of dead Chinamen. A Chinkie dies in Broome as regularly as a boat for Singapore is due. Most are boxed up in coffins made of the sandalwood which grows around here, and sent home. Broome sandalwood is in great demand in China, I know, but if it gets there in the shape of a coffin the boards are worth more than pearl shell!'

'I understand,' said Sam reflectively. 'All oysters don't carry pearls! I think, after all, I prefer sinking holes in the ground, after gold or gems, to diving under the sea.'

'We don't dive under the sea, old man,' put in Handsome Harry. 'We employ Manilamen and Japanese divers for that

job. We just play poker, wind a gramophone, read the latest books, and drink more than we should. The pearl shell comes to us and we sell it for filthy lucre. Most of us take a run up to Singapore or go south to Perth, Melbourne, and Sydney occasionally, and one or two of us get over to San Francisco at times, and even as far as New York and London——'

'I see the *Electron* coming in,' interrupted Macalister. 'We'd better get back to meet him. Gentleman James will have a lot to say if he has struck anything up north.'

The *Electron*, the palatial schooner on which the individual known as Gentleman James made his home, came into port in great style, and we all met its popular owner as he stepped on shore. He deserved his cognomen. As we sat at lunch, afterwards, in the club he told us that he had discovered a new bank of pearling ground in Collier Bay, beyond the Buccaneer Archipelago. 'It is only fifteen fathoms deep, boys,' he said, 'and is worth looking at. I came back in a hurry to tell you. We *may* load up all the luggers before the monsoon sets in; but there's a mangrove-fringed inlet we can make for, if caught, which opens out into a big land-locked bay I have never seen before. There are reefs of some mineral running through the shore rocks right down into the water, but I am not a mineralogist, and do not know what the stuff is. . . .'

The scene was changed. Sleepy Broome was galvanised into activity. Crews of Malays, Chinese, Manilamen, aborigines, and nondescripts were kicked up from their drink or drunk-induced slumbers by their serangs and bundled on board the fleet of luggers lying in Roebuck Bay. They could fight among themselves as much as they liked, but, by morning, they would be sober, and, if any were missing, their serangs, who were invariably the divers of the respective luggers, could easily replace them, and sharks leave no traces!

As a rule a lugger is in charge of its owner or a white man employed by him; but the actual work is seen to by the diver, who is always a very intelligent specimen of his race. He is always sober, because he receives a share of the profits, and hopes to return to his native land with his fortune, some day, and do what the wealthy people of that particular part of the world do. But once aboard the lugger getting pearl shells is the business of all. The lugger itself is a craft that could not weather much of a storm, as, so as to allow of the diver being raised and lowered

readily, it has only a few inches of freeboard. The white king of the ship reigns in the one cabin, aft, and, although he only makes his presence on board felt when necessary, his doing so fulfils his mission.

When the great assembly of luggers left port next morning for the new grounds, Broome was practically deserted. The expected steamer from Fremantle with mails and papers had not arrived, but no one cared. Some of the master pearlers owned several luggers and accompanied the fleet in their schooners, which served the double purpose of being a perfect floating home, where mosquitoes did not trouble, and for taking back to Broome the luggers' loads of shells, thus allowing them to continue working.

Big Sam and I were the guests of Gentleman James, and some of the other master pearlers also made use of the *Electron* in preference to their own vessels. Life was very pleasant on the *Electron*. Its owner was a kind of mystery man, with cultured tastes, and the ship was replete with everything tending to comfort. Sailing over the sparkling blue waters under an awning, with the cool sea-breezes blowing in our faces, was a sensation novel to my comrade and myself after our monotonous desert experience, and we enjoyed it thoroughly. We crossed King Sound, threaded a maze of islands, and reached the new pearling banks on the evening of the second day; but the luggers under their one oddly shaped sail had nearly all arrived by daylight following. All preparations had already been made, and pearling operations were in full swing early in the forenoon. The sea seemed to be alive with sinuous creatures, pink in colour, somewhat resembling eels but which, we were told, were known as sea-snakes. They were of all sizes, from six inches to about three feet in length, though more like a piece of animated cord than anything else, as far as their other proportions were concerned.

'Those creatures feed on oysters,' Gentleman James explained to us. 'Their presence is a sure index of a rich bed beneath; but, of course, if that bed is beyond sixteen fathoms we can't touch it, as, even with our latest diving dresses, that is the maximum depth a diver can stand.'

'If that depth can be survived by those Japs and Manilamen I reckon I could go a couple of fathoms more,' said Big Sam thoughtfully, and I caught the idea. We had dug under the dead ground for minerals, and it would be interesting to have a personal knowledge, also, of the depths of the living sea.

'We'll go round the luggers and see how they are doing,' laughed our host. 'Perhaps you'll get a chance to bring up shells if indications are favourable.'

We put off in a dinghy and boarded the lugger *Mist*. The diver, a Manilaman, was below, and net-loads of shells were coming up regularly. The two men at the air-pump worked and sang happily, and two other coolies stood by the raising gear. Others, comprising Chinese, Malays, aborigines, and Kanakas, received the shells as they came up and piled them in the proper place.

'We're doing well,' Chalmers, the owner of the lugger, remarked cheerfully. 'We'll get all we can carry in three or four shifts if the niggers don't kick up. Mariano is below.'

Mariano was the acknowledged best diver of the fleet, and Big Sam and I had already fraternised with him, in a way, in Broome.

'It is strange how a desire to accumulate wealth will make men take unnecessary risks,' observed Gentleman James. 'Every master pearler here knows that his crew may have some bottles of "snake juice" hidden away, and that he ought to have given another day, at least, to ensure its being finished. The pearl beds could wait until the monsoon drives us away.'

'That's all right for a hermit philosopher like you to say,' laughed Chalmers, 'but as long as I don't lose Mariano I don't care how many of the niggers kill themselves or each other—'

Big Sam uttered an unprintable exclamation and ran forward. We all looked after him in surprise.

'You are losing Mariano now, Chalmers,' said Gentleman James, gaining Sam's side in a few seconds. Then Chalmers uttered some strange sounds resembling those frequently made by some people while under the influence of deep emotion and, with me, sprang at the two coolies who had been manning the air-pump a moment previously, but had now ceased and were trying to kill each other. Big Sam and Gentleman James had restarted the pump already, and Chalmers and I attended to the two pumpsmen in orthodox manner. Mariano was hauled aloft, and his helmet unscrewed: 'Plenty much pearl down there,' he murmured, then faded out into unconsciousness. He was carried aft and left to recover.

'Now is your chance of seeing what the pearl beds are like,' said Gentleman James to us. 'Chalmers will need a diver now, I expect.'

'I'll go,' volunteered Sam, 'if you and my mate man the pump.'

'I'll go,' said I, 'if you and my mate man the pump.'

I won the toss, and presently was being encased in Mariano's dress. It was the very latest contrivance, but, apart from the helmet, which contained some mysterious valves and tubes, it seemed to me to be only a thickly padded suit of some rubber-like composition.

'Come out, boy,' advised Sam. 'I didn't mean to dare you to go down.'

'You'd better let Chalmers go down himself, if he can't get another diver,' added Gentleman James. 'Diving isn't a white man's job.'

'I am going down,' I said, and the helmet was screwed on without another word. I thought this was abrupt treatment, until I remembered that I could not hear what anyone may have said afterwards. In a moment I felt myself being raised off the deck and dropped overboard. I was already sick, and the rubber-tainted air pumped into me seemed like chloroform. The world fell away from me, light went out, and I felt I had, somehow, turned a somersault. A blurred mass of seething green flashed past the glasses in the helmet, my ears seemed to burst, and my head felt as if it had swollen enormously. I think I must have been unconscious for a second or so, but I became myself again with the shock experienced on hitting the bottom. The buzzing in my ears had now ceased, the mist of green settled itself into a semi-transparent wall of sea water, and the rhythmic pulsations of the air-pump above sounded like hammer strokes. I perspired profusely—a new experience to me—and then realised that I was standing amidst a marine forest of giant coral, the delicate fronds of which were trembling as if in a breeze. I could see only a few yards around me, and even the objects inside my range of vision appeared like a picture out of focus. Shellfish of all kinds seemed to be resting among the coral branches, like birds on trees, and among them were varieties that hitherto had only appeared to me in nightmares.

Suddenly I remembered I was a diver in pursuit of pearl shells, and I looked around for them. They were everywhere. The ocean bed seemed to be paved with them, and crevices in coral ledges were filled with them. Remembering all I could of the instructions I had received, I filled the net hanging alongside me with

the shells I gathered, not too easily, from their resting-places, and gave the signal to haul. The net shot up and a lot of fish followed it, and I began gathering more shells. This was not done exactly as one wished to do, because the lugger, continually drifting overhead, carried me away on the taut ropes, and often I could not reach the coveted spoil. But I filled the returned nets several times, then suddenly found myself swung off my feet and suspended in a gulf of blackness. My reason told me I had been pulled into a depth too deep for exploration, but presently, before I could signal, I struck ground again. I had crossed an ocean hole of some kind. Pearl shells were again plentiful around and I filled more nets, and thought I was doing well. But not for long. Without warning, from the depths of the hole just passed, lashed out some long whip-like tentacles. One or two touched me, I think, and my nerves failed me. After all, I was a prospector, and diving was not my line. I had feared only sharks and knew they were to be reckoned with; but an octopus of the size the tentacles suggested was not in my contract, and I pulled the communication cord three times. I must have caused some alarm on top, for I instantly shot upwards, gyrating the while like a spinning minnow. I again experienced a feeling of sickness, but the sudden dump I got when hauled on deck helped me to recover, and I was completely restored when the helmet was unscrewed and I breathed the free untainted air of heaven once more. When I told of my experience with the octopus Chalmers and Gentleman James laughed. 'They do grow to enormous sizes in those parts,' the latter said; 'but your friend below was a good bit more frightened than you were when it felt what you were like. Mariano will go down and kill it when he gets better.'

When the gentle-voiced diver was better, however, the lugger had drifted past the hole, beyond the reach of his life-line, and that octopus may be there still.

In course of the day Big Sam went below from another lugger, called *The Dawn*. Of course, I stood by, on top, with others, ready to man the pump if the operating natives stopped working to settle any argument. But nothing happened, and Sam, after adding a fair amount to the growing cargo of shells, was hauled aloft, as thankful as I had been to breathe fresh air again. All day the fleet drifted slowly over the waters, dragging the divers after them on their long lines of tubes and ropes. No accident happened while we were with the party, but we were told that

sometimes a jagged mass of coral or sharp rock cuts the slack air-pipe as it is being dragged over it. On such occasions a diver's soul goes out on the 'west' wind to fare according to its merits, and the fleet is sad. The divers are the only men the master pearl-ers trust, and that trust is seldom betrayed.

In a few days every lugger was fully loaded, but a storm was working up from the south which, although not yet the monsoon, would render the journey to Broome on the laden awash-deck luggers suicidal. So at the general council it was decided to seek shelter in the land-locked bay which Gentleman James knew. Big Sam and I had become adepts in the art and science—and other things—pertaining to pearling. We had had a rough, though not a bad time, crossing the hinterland from Darwin, but now we were living in the lap of luxury among good fellows, and experiencing a new sensation. Floating on the sea, too, especially on the *Electron*, was somewhat different from sitting in the saddle all day looking for mineral outcrops, while our horses attended, more or less, to their own course. We felt we had become sailors. Still, pearling was a lazy life, and we sometimes thought of the camp-fire circle where there were no evil-smelling natives—nor pearl shells.

We sailed through the timber-clad opening of the inlet and, almost immediately, found ourselves in a deep-water channel amidst mountains which rose sheer from the shore. Tropical vegetation grew profusely in all the water-worn gullies which cut up the rocks and led into the heart of the unknown ranges behind, and in one or two fresh water still trickled. We were now safe from any storm, and shore-exploring parties were the order of the day. In this Big Sam and I were in our element, and when my comrades picked up a nugget of gold weighing nearly five ounces excitement ran high. The serangs were left to superintend the discharging and opening of shells, if the respective lugger owners desired that to be done, and a smelleriferous camp, formed by some beached luggers and tarpaulin covers, grew magically.

The shore parties found traces of gold everywhere, evidently emanating from a source beyond in the heart of the interior ranges, which, some of our aborigines said, was the home of fierce tribes of their people, who had never seen white men, and who still held the high corroborree at full moon. Gems of the sapphire variety, including zircons and topazes, were very plentiful in one of the valleys over the coastal range, and some stones which we thought

belonged to the diamond family were also found by some Chinese when off duty, but where, they could not or would not tell.

One day it was reported that the storm had subsided outside, and the pearlers calculated they could make Broome in time to catch the Holt steamer for Singapore with their shells. In a few hours all parties were called in and the luggers ready for sea again.

'We've made good profits,' said Chalmers to Big Sam and me, hesitatingly, as he and the other master pearlers examined about a hundred magnificent pearls saved by their chiefs of staff during the forcible opening of the shells. 'Those pearls are worth a fortune, and our shells are worth another. The fact is—excuse my bad way of putting it—the boys have deputised me to ask you to join us as pearlers. Gentleman James has got a couple of spare luggers down in Broome which we'll jointly buy for you and—'

'I am *giving* them, Chalmers,' put in Gentleman James, quietly; and others then spoke.

Sam and I looked at each other. He was handling the nugget. I nodded to him.

'Then it's settled?' cried Handsome Harry, observing my sign.

'Yes, but not what you mean,' answered Sam. 'We are mighty grateful to you boys for the good time you've given us and for what you're now offering us, and we'd like to stay with you more than—Oh, darn it! My mate can explain better—'

'We are going through those mountains to find out where Sam's nugget came from,' I said. 'If the natives don't finish us we'll perhaps join you later. . . .'

The fleet sailed for Broome, and a dinghy-load of stores and tools was left on the beach for our use. As we watched the luggers glide out, a man leaped from the deck of one and swam ashore. It was my old chum, Boston Bob. 'I'm coming with you,' he said, as he reached the shore. And he came.

ROBERT M. MACDONALD.

*A MAN OF INACTION.*¹

BY G. E. MITTON.

I.

'Pull, pull the oars
And leave the women at home.'

THE words, chanted in a hoarse chorus, to an air that might have been that of 'Rye Sally Walker,' rang across the slate-grey smoothness of Ullswater Lake from a jovial crew who were pulling up to Pooley Bridge in anticipation of an evening's spree. No sooner had they ceased their inane chant than some one of them started a gramophone in a rollicking harsh tune.

Two men who had pulled in under the shadow of the sleeping hills were savagely annoyed.

'Howling devils,' said one who was in charge of the oars. The other, who was sitting in the stern, stooped abruptly, and picking up a shot-gun which lay in the bottom of the boat, discharged it deliberately in the direction of the passing boat-load, invisible in the drooping darkness. The discharge had no more effect on the offenders than the opening of a soda-water bottle; they continued on their way, leaving behind them a trail of outrageous noise, like the noisome murk from a steamer funnel. The report of the gun re-echoed from the opposite hills, for the lake was fairly narrow just here, and mingled with it came a sharp cry in a treble voice.

'By the Lord,' said the oarsman, dropping his hands in amazement. 'You mad fool! You've shot someone.'

'Pull over, Retford, and let's investigate,' said the culprit calmly.

'A dozen times I've regretted I ever came with you, Leven,' Retford went on as he pulled wrathfully across the oily water. 'The only thing to say is that you are not capable of taking care of yourself.'

'I wonder why I did that,' commented Leven; 'I shouldn't, if I had thought for a moment, I suppose. I just wanted to frighten them. I never dreamt the old blunderbuss would carry so far, and it seems to have carried right across. The shore must be nearer than it looks.'

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'If I hadn't come with you there'd have been murder done before this,' grumbled Retford as the boat glided in to a stony beach, silent, and apparently deserted. Search revealed a rough stone boathouse and a landing-place, but there was no sign of a human being. Soberly they rowed on up the lake to their own landing-place, which was on the same side.

'I suppose you're going right up to the house,' said Retford resignedly, as he made the boat fast. 'I must, of course, try to trace the victim and offer adequate compensation.'

Leven stood just a little above him, ruffling up his hair quizzically. 'I suppose that *would* fall within your duties,' he said, 'but you didn't bargain for that. Is it worth it, Retford—is it worth it? That's what you must ask yourself.'

With this extraordinary remark he went on alone.

II.

'I've done all I can,' said Retford an hour or so later, as he sank into a chair, still panting from the ascent of the steep hill on which the house stood. 'The conduct of these matters needs tact and diplomacy. It's infernally unpleasant to be mixed up in them, I can tell you.'

'Yes, my dear fellow, I know. I am burning to hear, of course, but just before you begin I'll ask—why do it?'

'Someone must,' replied Retford, hitching his chair round and beginning an impressive narrative. 'I went first to a man who does odd jobs on the road. I ascertained from him that the boat-house is sometimes used by the daughter of the landlord of the inn—hotel they call it. Deductively I argued that she must have been your victim, for it was certainly a woman's voice we heard cry out. I went to the inn and asked for the young lady——'

'Yes,' interrupted Leven; 'I appreciate your style immensely—none better; but just tell me, before we get any further, is she really hurt? I shall enjoy the rest of it all the more for knowing beforehand. Don't doubt that.'

Retford heeded him not; he went on: 'She is—well, you know, for that class—she is an uncommonly attractive girl. She spoke in an uncommonly attractive voice. I noticed at once that her hand was bandaged——'

'Sleuth-hound,' murmured Leven, looking at his pipe bowl.

'She protested it was nothing. One of the spent shot must

have struck her as she was standing on the landing-stage securing her little boat. She was ashamed of having cried out, but it was the shock of it coming out of the dark, and the next instant she heard the thunder of the low rolling echoes of the gun. I assure you I felt quite uncomfortable in offering her the usual form of compensation, but I knew that if it had to be done it was better done by me, so I hinted very gently how nice a pretty trinket would look on her pretty wrist.'

'She would appreciate that,' came out of Leven's corner.

'Extraordinary to say, she didn't! You never know where you are with these people. She drew back, and grew rather stiff and cold. I fear it will have to be money.'

'You didn't go on to that, did you?' asked Leven with interest.

'Yes, I did. It's got to be done. I said something about a cheque—that sounded best—and I knew you could well afford it. She laughed then, and said I might rest assured her very slight hurt needed no such plaster, and that, as unpleasant accidents were apt to stay in the mind longer than was agreeable, it seemed to her it would be a great pity to erect a tablet to the memory of this one. I don't know how it was, but I found I could say nothing else, and had to leave.'

'I see. Well, you've done your best, and no one can do more.'

Retford shuffled a bit in his chair. 'I've wanted to say something to you, Leven, ever since we came here.'

'Say on.'

'It was obviously an arrangement that suited us both—our coming for a holiday here together, I mean. I'm glad you saw that directly I suggested it. You have the money, of course—'

'And you the tact, *savoir faire*, etc. etc. Yes?'

'I wouldn't have put it quite like that, but you certainly are the most casual fellow I ever met. With your opportunities of birth, education, money, you ought to be in a very different position from what you are. It comes to this, Leven, you've done nothing—you never have done anything.'

Leven was standing now with his back to the fireplace. His sad eyes and thinning hair were very plain to see. 'You're perfectly right,' he said indifferently.

'But don't you want to do things?'

'So many people "do things."'

'Yes, but the "world is full of opportunities, strings of tension

waiting to be struck." I don't remember where that comes from, but it isn't original.'

'That's the theory, I know ; but supposing a man doesn't seem to get the opportunities ?'

'Why don't you look around for them ? Found a hospital or endow something, so that you can have your name associated with at least one deed for the good of your fellow-men. I should be wretched if I had had your chances and died feeling that not one soul was the better for my having had them.'

He got up as he spoke and nodded good-night, leaving the other man standing by the chimney-piece.

III.

The cottage where the two men were staying was set up against the green side of Swarth so snugly that the back upstairs windows were level with the earth. The sun was not up, and the dim grey light was still sharply cold, when Leven got out of the small wooden bed he occupied, and, slipping on a pair of canvas shoes, climbed, just as he was, in his pyjamas, out of the narrow casement and on to the grass. Though broad of shoulder he was anything but stout, and after the start the rest was easy. Then he began strolling upwards over the sheep-nibbled grass. Swarth is not very high, and though it rises sharply, its rounded slopes and grassy terraces afford a choice of ascent pleasant to a man who starts for a mere before-breakfast stroll. As Leven strode upwards the sheep, lying in the lee of the great slate-coloured boulders, darkened by the wet morning mist, arose jerkily on their black mossy legs, in that clumsy, all-one-piece fashion peculiar to sheep. Their seamed fleeces were soaking and their attractive little narrow black faces had an odd expression of interested inquiry.

Leven's mind was running on Retford. What a good fellow he was really, and how intolerable ! He was personable in appearance, with his tall, well-built figure, his clean face, and black hair. Why was it that everything he said and did was as dust in the mouth, so that getting away from him to clear the system with a breath of fresh air was a necessity now and again ? Yet Retford was right, quite right, in what he had said. It was the knowledge of his own futility that banked Leven in at every turn. He had meant to do something at first, of course—not exactly in the line of putting up colossal mausoleums of brick and mortar to house unfortunate

children as a lasting memorial to himself—but something. And he had never done anything but help those he met along the road, when he understood their needs. Retford, for instance. Retford was a proud beggar; he would not take anything as a gift. He could not have afforded a holiday like this, but he certainly would not have come unless Leven had accepted his suggestion of being business manager, so to speak, and carrying the purse, so that he could feel he was being useful. He was a man of probity; every item was docketed—in fact, Leven wished he wouldn't docket so much; it was a nuisance, but it must be borne in order to reinforce Retford in the idea that he was earning his holiday. However, it would soon be over; three weeks wasn't much to give to a fellow like Retford who had to swat in an office all his days.

Leven had reached the cairn before the sun actually rose, and he stood on the bald patch with its indications of the haunting of many rabbits. The wind thrummed through the hollow interspaces of the stones, put together so cleverly without mortar as to form a monstrous beehive. Then up came the sun with that peculiar glitter reserved for very early time. Light without heat. It was cold still on this morning in August, and Leven turned away to go down by the beck, which had cleft for itself a highly irregular gash in the hillside.

He knew it well; there was one pool as large as a decent-sized room, full of the brown water which poured in a cascade from above. He wished he had brought his towels; he might have had a dip. Retford would say that was just like his casualness. He neared the pool noiselessly, approaching it from above over the close grass. He was forestalled!

Already in the pool, swimming round and round, throwing brown arms gleefully over her thick brown-covered head, was a girl. As Leven dropped suddenly behind one of the great split stones, she stood up on the margin, and he saw that she had on some sort of costume of stockinette, but it was almost flesh-colour—her undermost undergarment probably—however, no worse than those worn by thousands of girls disporting themselves on the sandy coasts in full human view all round the south of England. Conscious of no ill intent, he watched the prettiest spectacle he had ever seen.

Directly he saw her out of the water he knew that this was the daughter of the inn; for a tight small bandage still held her left hand. Her discarded clothes were lying in a small heap beneath a rowan tree, which, with the perversity of its kind, had chosen to

grow on the very lip of the rock and hang out across the brown down-flowing stream. The berries in their rich profusion showed up among the feathery leaves and against the grey satin-smooth stem. As Leven watched, the girl dived in again, and swam over to the place where the cascade, greatly shrunken at this time of year, fell in a silver streak. It broke down over a niche like a chimney laid bare, and the sides of this were cushioned in dripping green moss. With a shiver of delight the girl reared herself into the chimney, laughing as the water burst into splinters around her, and she swayed her beautiful curved body backwards and forwards into the cushioned moss with eyes close shut.

A very unusual girl certainly !

IV.

At breakfast Retford declared, with the profound simplicity of one who has never suffered from the ache of an error in judgment, 'I thought it just as well to make further inquiries about the people at the inn—hotel, as they persist in calling it. The old man married again, while this girl, his only child, was away at a boarding-school. He is very fond of her, but has made the common mistake of educating her above her station. It is a great pity, for now she is of no use to herself or any one else.'

Leven arranged that Retford should go into Pooley Bridge to fetch necessaries, including a particular sort of tobacco, after tea that evening, and when he was well on the road he himself strolled down to the landing-place below the inn.

Before he got there he found the girl he sought, though at the first glance he felt surprised at her appearance. She was dressed in hardly more clothes than when he had seen her in the earliest morning hours. Her arms, neck, and head were bare ; her scanty skirt dropped scarcely to the knee, yet she carried herself so that the lines of her figure gave an air of the latest fashion to the drapery. Whatever quality it is that marks out the well-dressed from the ill-dressed, it was hers.

As he drew near, raising his hat, she smiled at him frankly, and it was he who felt embarrassed. He made the obvious move by looking at her hand, now free of its bandage, and she met him before he got out his apology. 'It's nothing—all gone now.' Then almost immediately, 'Was it you who did it ? The other gentleman who came here last night said *he* didn't.' The use of the word

'gentleman' alone betrayed her origin; in tone and accent she spoke faultlessly.

'I am the guilty one; he only came to make the peace for me,' said Leven, leaning on the rail over the green water, and looking at her. She certainly was pretty.

'You would have done better to come for yourself,' she said quickly. Leven smiled.

'You would not have said what he did,' she went on, glancing at him and away again.

'Now how on earth do you know that?'

She threw out her hands with a little gesture that struck him as rather pathetic: 'How does one know anything?'

'You think that I would have offered you something less tangible and more valuable than a mere trinket?' he asked, regarding her curiously.

She looked at him with quick suspicion.

'The offer of willing service,' he went on. 'Is there anything I can do for you? If there is, I will do it.'

She also leaned meditatively on the rail, half-turning her back on him. 'A dangerous thing to say to a woman,' she murmured softly, with an air and manner that might have belonged to a reigning society beauty. 'But of all that a woman desires what does a man know? I shall not hold you to your very rash promise.'

'I am sorry for it. I should at least be interested to hear what it is that I may not attempt,' he answered, coming over beside her.

'That would be to lay bare so much,' she said very low indeed. 'Not yet—perhaps—who knows, it might come,—but now to prove you, I will ask you something. You are a rich man, Mr. Leven, are you not?'

It was spoken with a simplicity that carried no offence.

'Fairly well-to-do as these days go.'

'Then—could you—do you think you could, help someone?'

Her eagerness now flooded up over her.

'Try me.'

'If I tell you and you can't, you must promise to forget about it.'

'Miss Sinclair—for answer I'll tell you something about myself. I'm a poor duffer of a fellow who started life with his hands full of good things, which he was eager to share with others, but because of some quality of futility in him he has never been able to do anything satisfactorily. He has blundered, he has been tricked with

his eyes open, he has audibly heard the laughter of the fools he thought to benefit—and now he drifts—he does nothing.'

'I don't believe it.' Her bright eyes were child-like, looking up at his with a mixture of tenderness and trust he found irresistible.

He cleared his throat; he found this sudden belief amazingly touching. 'Tell me the name of the person you want me to help,' he asked.

'His name is Teddy.'

Then she had a lover! A stupid, good-hearted country lout, probably, who wanted a lift in life. A pity; she was of the few who had unspoiled perceptions and dared to trust in them.

Mr. Sinclair from the hotel came into view, bringing a couple of anglers to the boat. The girl Jessie did not run away; instead, in modern fashion, she thrust the boat out, threw in the cushions, and arranged the oars before the party came abreast.

The last Leven saw of her was as she glanced back from the stern before they rounded the point of Hallin. The boat was doubled in the glassy water.

V.

There was but a scanty congregation in the little church of Martindale the following morning. A few visitors, very much in holiday garb, were sprinkled among the white-bloused, shiny-faced country girls and the rather awkward young shepherds who formed the normal number.

The service was so comically mingled with 'sheep' that it seemed to Leven's imaginative mind to be more of a dream than reality. The low-arched door was left open, and the plaintive bleat of the sheep formed a long undercurrent to all that went on; their poignant smell was strong near the door, and one innocently interested wanderer peeped in on his nibbling way past. But more than that: the psalm for the day happened to be that about 'green pastures'—the hymn was, 'There were ninety and nine that safely lay'; and when the old clergyman, fifty years pastured on these slopes, mounted the pulpit, he gave out in his quavering voice, which was absurdly punctuated with little bleats each time he took breath, 'All we like sheep have gone astray.'

Now that he was sitting, Leven could see more of the congregation who had been cut off before by the pillar against which, true to his retiring instincts, he had planted himself. He tried to spot

'Teddy,' but there were so many possible Teddies that he gave it up. In the vicar's pew was pathos enough and to spare. A careworn mother, with renunciation of earth and hopes of heaven writ clear upon her face, had next to her one of two freckled, snub-nosed girls in cotton frocks and cotton gloves; and on the other side a boy of about fourteen, comically ugly. He had a head of stubbly sandy hair of that tint that seems to permeate the very skin. His head was large and lumpy, his lips protuberant, the eyes small and deep-set. The boy's jacket was too small, his trousers too large, but his collar was spotless and his conduct irreproachable.

The next morning when Leven went down to his own boat-place with the idea of fishing, he found this lad in possession, dressed in well-worn homespun. Some remarks about fishing-tackle proved him an expert, and soon he was drawn to answer a few questions about himself. Yes, he lived at home; his father taught him. That was about the sum of it.

Then Jessie Sinclair came floating down on them along the strand between the landing-stage of the inn and theirs.

Teddy's shy, ugly face radiated light and glory as he looked at her, but he gathered in his fishing-tackle, and departed without a word.

'So you have found him,' Jessie said breathlessly. 'What do you think of him?'

'That is Teddy?' asked the amazed Leven.

'Yes, yes. Teddy is a genius. Oh, I know it. *I do* know things about people. He can't speak even to me of the great thoughts he has, but he gets them down on paper sometimes. No one has seen them but me. He is cramped and buried here. Do you know that the vicar, his father, teaches him, though he knows nothing? Think of the agony of it. Day by day Teddy goes over the same old grind and pretends he knows no more, because, you see, it would be dreadful for his father to know he thinks it all baby-food. His father is stupid—oh yes, it is a dreadful thing to say of a clergyman, but it's true. He is jealous of Teddy. Long ago Teddy tried to tell him that he was far beyond what he is allowed to do, but he was dreadfully snubbed, and now he says nothing.'

'But, my dear girl,' Leven protested, when the torrent of words had run itself out; 'it's absurd. It's not human nature. If the boy is really clever, the father would be the first to be gratified. Why? If because of nothing else, he would see a future for his son.'

'He doesn't. He's just the particular kind of fool who can't. He's been here too long; he's grown like a sheep. He's got that suspicious stare a sheep has at anything beyond the grass. No one knows but me. They think Teddy a dull good boy. He can't even talk to me as we would like; we can't go walks together, because they think it "strange" and "odd." Oh, I would like you to hear how the vicar's wife says those words! It makes them sound so frightfully peculiar. I even began to believe it *was* odd that anyone so nobly born as the fourteen-year-old vicar's son should find mental friendship with the innkeeper's lowly daughter of eighteen!'

'What must I do?' asked Leven submissively.

'Read some of the things he has written. I will give them to you, but, of course, you mustn't let him know. By the way, Mr. Leven, you seemed so surprised when I said that it was Teddy I wanted you to help. Who did you think it was?'

'I imagined Teddy was some young man in whom you had an interest.'

'A lover? I have no lovers! How could I have? I am like no one here, just a betwixt-and-between. The young shepherds would, of course, never dream of it. And what have I to find in them? The visitors treat me with a half-playful friendly familiarity.'

'You seem almost as lonely as Teddy.'

'I suppose I am. There is so little I can do. Have you seen my stepmother? She is very nice, pretty too, and a good manager. She is just "it," not—oh, how can I say it?—not knowing that there is anything beyond. That's so curious, isn't it? When one gets to know a little bit, ever such a little bit more, one can always look back and see what is behind, but one can never look on above and see the beyond—not to comprehend it, that is. Unless one knows there is more to know, I mean, how can one understand one's own ignorance? I *do* express it badly. No matter about me. The time will come when I shall escape quite easily.'

'How will you manage that?'

'A woman's way. I shall marry. Yes, as I said, there are not many, but there are a few I could have, conceited ones, of course—a little wheedling, a little flattery, and they would nobly sacrifice themselves to their own inclinations by marrying the beggar girl,—my King Cophetuas. A conceited man need not be a bad husband, and he would always be easy to manage.'

VI.

A week later and the lake was wildly tossing its wind-raised waves; the rain stalked the hills in gigantic spectral columns, and the air that had been so warm was icy-cold.

A wood fire burned brightly within the little house under the lee of the hill, and Leven, with a richly coloured pipe in his mouth, sat deeply absorbed in some odd scraps of paper. Their miscellaneous character, and their condition, written on both sides, spoke eloquently of the shifts of Teddy to get the simplest material on which to set down his bursting thought. What Leven had inspected so far showed brain certainly. The poems and ideas were mostly in Latin or in classical English; they would have been creditable as the work of a sixth-form boy in a public school, and were clever as the work of a mostly self-taught child of fourteen, but they displayed no genius.

Retford had been wandering up and down restlessly.

'I say, Leven,' he said, after four or five attempts to break into speech. 'She's an extremely clever girl, you know, and when all is said against her that can be said——'

'Umph?'

'I mean about her station in life and all that, you have to remember that brains tell, and a woman, clever and charming, easily reaches up to her husband's station. These Westmorland people have good blood in their veins, too. It isn't her looks that attract me so much as her discrimination. She is so perceptive; she knows a fool when she sees one—and—er—a man who isn't a fool too, you know. Some people are so dense, it would kill me to live with them.'

'Eh? Who is it you are talking of?'

'Jessie Sinclair. But I'm only rotting, I couldn't really do it. My mother would have a word to say. No. I must see her again, of course, and soothe down any little feeling I may unintentionally have aroused.'

'I fancy it will depend on her,' said Leven half to himself.

'What? Well, you obviously don't want me, so I think I'll just go down to the hotel. What a night!'

When, with a good deal of fuss and stamping, he had got into his mackintosh and departed, Leven resumed his reading. The last thing he got hold of was the best. Most unpromising choice of material one would have thought. It was a poem in English

blank verse, telling the story of Er the son of Armenius, taken from the tenth book of Plato's 'Republic.' In some mysterious way the boy had caught the glow of Plato's high thought. With many a mark of the tool he had laboured, but the inspiration shone through, and there was something that came and went that made Leven's breath come faster. He had found his mark of genius, the girl was right! How on earth had she known? The boy was crude and undeveloped, obviously limited by his disadvantages, but he was a boy with a mind which could fly to any height.

Leven let the paper fall on his knee, and sat on looking into the coal fire necessary on this cold northern August evening. Teddy should be his grand opportunity. In Teddy he would see developed all those dreams with which he had started life. He had meant to write poetry; he had meant to be a great classical scholar; and in the fine mind of the child he saw the creative power he had lacked. It would be no difficult matter after all to give this boy those opportunities of culture which would free him to soar to the heights for which his eagle spirit yearned.

And he, Leven, who sat there, began to feel that at last he should do some great thing for another. Blindly he sat, unconscious that his way through life was already marked by 'great' things. Never a fellow-creature had appealed to him in vain; never one had been helped without the resources of a finely sensitive soul being taxed that the gift of help might be delivered without hurt to the self-respect of the recipient.

His pathway behind was radiant with light, but he knew it not. He looked onward, and saw only the light that he should kindle for himself by the discovery of Teddy.

Meantime, in an upstairs room at the hotel-inn, Retford was face to face with Jessie. It was a small room, overfilled with worn furniture. It was occasionally let as a 'private sitting-room' to visitors in the summer, and was used by the family in the winter. Everything in it had a discoloured look. The cheap piano piled with dog-eared torn music, the damp walls plastered with cheap pictures in cheaper frames, and china ornaments set upon plush 'plaques.' It was a room where, if you moved at all, you had also to move some piece of furniture to make way.

At the table sat Jessie with a soiled account-book before her. She had been adding up the columns before Retford came in at the door, and, shutting it behind him, sat down on a chair close to her. He had asked for her, and when her father offered to fetch

her, and, instead, he had suggested going up himself to find her, he had decided his fate in life.

'I wish you hadn't come,' said Jessie, her face bent low over her figures, 'but now you are here you might help me with these accounts; the total comes different every time.'

Instead of that, he leaned nearer to her, across the creased red rep cloth. 'Why do you say you wish I hadn't come, Jessie?'

'You know.' The words were so low that he had to lean nearer yet.

'Perhaps I can guess. You think that I shall soon go away, eh?'

No answer.

'Tell me, Jessie, would you be very sad if I went away?'

'Of course not,' with a defiant shake of the head. 'I wouldn't. I should think then you were just like all the rest.'

'And you don't think so now?'

For answer she looked up at him under her lashes for one glinting moment, but it was enough—Retford was a doomed man.

'And what would you say if you knew I had come here to-night to ask you to be my wife?'

Never had he felt so deliciously magnanimous, so grand and noble as then!

'I should say——'

'Yes?' He was holding her now in his arms.

'That you were different from any man I had ever known.'

'My darling! You are fit to be the wife of a king.'

'Then you are my king,' she said, turning to him.

When he heard the news, Leven puzzled long whether this would be accounted to him for righteousness or not, and then gave it up in despair and fell back upon his undoubted 'find' of Teddy.

ELIZA IN CHAINS. †*

BY E. M. FORSTER.

I.

It is over three months since her dear ones at Blackheath have had news from Mrs. Eliza Fay, the married sister who went to seek her fortune in the East. Their anxiety is extreme. Her last letter—bearing the date November 4, 1779—was written at sea. Pious yet lively, like all her letters, it gave them a vivid account of the voyage from Suez, described the captain, the insufficient food, the uncomfortable cabin, the defects of her husband, and the advantages of religion, and it severely satirised the other passengers. She had never seen such odious creatures as the other passengers. Thankful she was that in a short time she would see them no more. A Mr. Hare was the worst—a barrister with weak white eyes and a tireless tongue, who was jealous of the Fays because they, too, hoped to make money in India out of the law. But Mr. and Mrs. Tulloh were almost as horrible as Mr. Hare—the man so vulgar, the woman so depraved, and never happy unless she was the centre of attention. Fortunately the voyage was over. Farewell confinement! The coast of Malabar was in sight, the sea calmer, her appetite better than ever, and her next would be dated from Bengal.

And then this terrible silence.

And when the letter does arrive, what—oh! what can be their feelings! It is more like a parcel than a letter—fifteen thousand words long,—but one glance at the opening paragraph is enough. Eliza is in prison!

CALCUT, 12th February, 1780.

‘MY DEAR FRIENDS,—It was my determination never to write to you, during the state of dreadful Captivity in which we have long been held, but having hopes of a release, think I may venture to give you some account of our sufferings, which have been extreme, both in body and mind, for a period of fifteen weeks, which we have spent in wretched confinement, totally in the power of Barbarians.

‘I must premise that, such is the harrassing confusion of my

* *The Original Letters of Mrs. Eliza Fay* were published by her in 1817; they will shortly be republished by the Hogarth Press.

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mind, and the weakness of my nerves, that I can merely offer you a simple statement of facts, and even that must necessarily be incorrect, for incessant anxiety and constant anticipation of more intolerable evils have totally unhinged my faculties. God knows whether I may ever recover them ; at present all is confused and clouded. Anxieties about Mr. Fay's capacities and prospects had long been as so many daggers piercing my vitals, and now even were the most brilliant success to crown our future views, never could I know comfort, till the blessed moment arrive when I shall clasp you all to my fond heart without fear of a future separation : except by that stroke, to which we must all submit, and which has been suspended over my head as by a single hair.

'But I forget that all this while you are impatient to hear how we fell into so distressing a situation ; take then the particulars.'

And starting with 'the (to me ever memorable) 5th November' she unfolds her particulars—a tale of muddledom and misery that can have few parallels, even in the annals of Anglo-India. None of the actors are important, few of them are otherwise known to history, but the knots they tied themselves into are far more amazing and complicated than the exploits of princes and queens.

A prince was in the background—Hyder Ali of Mysore—'that tyger,' as Mrs. Fay calls him. When the innocent ship reached Calicut, intending to stop only a few hours there, Hyder Ali was more or less at war with the English, but the passengers did not know this, nor was he sure of it himself, being still less at war rather than more. The Governor of Calicut was also not quite sure ; indeed, during the whole of the three months an Oriental haze prevailed. Leaning over the bulwarks the passengers gazed nervously at the shore. Why was the English flag not flying on the Factory ? Why did the natives row out in their little boats and shout so savagely ? Everyone asked these questions : no one could answer them. Mrs. Tulloh was the only person to take a cheerful view. She hoped there would be a fight, she cried : she loved a fight—it was the next best thing to a shipwreck ; and she had her chair carried on to deck in order to get a good view of the carnage. Such behaviour was repugnant to Eliza, who went below, 'not feeling myself inclined to brave horrors of this nature, for the mere love of exhibition,' and prepared to tend the wounded. The Danish Consul came on board, with the news that his English colleague had fled, furniture and all, and he invited the passengers to put themselves under the protection of Denmark until the status of the ship was settled, and she was allowed to proceed.

And now the quarrels of the voyage out bore their fruit.

Whatever the other passengers did, Eliza and her husband always did the reverse, so that when Mr. Hare and the Tullohs went on shore they, naturally, stopped on board. Five days passed, ominous and lonely. Over in the Danish Factory the captain was fighting duels with the passengers, who demanded their fares back because he did not continue the voyage to Bengal. The natives grew bolder, and tried to climb on to the deck out of their little boats. 'Pho!' said Mr. Fay, 'it is impossible they should mean any harm. Are we not under the protection of the Danish flag?' But Mr. Fay was wrong. Indeed he was never right; error was the only constant element in his character.

"You must not be alarmed," said he a few minutes later. "I have news to tell you:—we are to have a hundred and fifty sepoy on board to night." "Sepoy, for what?" "Why, the English are coming to attack Calicut, and our Captain has promised the governor his assistance, who has sent these troops for our defence." "Oh Mr. F——," replied I, "this is a very improbable story, for God's sake suffer them not to enter the ship if you can avoid, otherwise we are ruined." However, being nearly destitute of Arms and Ammunition, what could we do but recommend ourselves to the Divine Providence, which I may truly say was never more earnestly solicited by me.

The sepoy was under an Englishman who had the title of captain and the features of a crow—a disgusting fellow named Ayres. He had begun life as a saddler's apprentice, continued it as a highwayman, and was now in Hyder Ali's service; and he claimed the ship for his government, since all the Europeans on shore were quarrelling and could not decide to whom it belonged. His men (Moplahs, no doubt) began to loot, rushing hither and thither through the vessel, while the wind rose and the darkness came on. About midnight they came to the door of the Fays' cabin and smashed and tore at the woodwork, and brandished their scimitars and yelled 'Ao, ao!'—the Hindustani for 'Come!'—a word which Eliza now heard for the first time, and which 'made an impression on me that is indescribable: I can never hear it pronounced on the most common occasion without trembling.' Mr. Fay replied that his wife was asleep, and the sepoy believed him for a time, as sepoy would, though they continued to shriek 'Ao!' and batter the panels. It occurred to one of them at last that the noise must have awoken her, and he cried out in broken English that he would murder the lady immediately unless she let him in. Mr. Fay drew his sword at this, and swore that he would

run the first man through the body who should presume to enter his wife's apartment; his words and gestures were both very fine. Death seemed inevitable—death rather than dishonour—and no doubt if the Fays had embraced it they would have received higher marks from historians. But they were minor characters: they did not want to die; and, sheathing their sword, they began to collect their possessions. They would have to join Mr. Hare and the Tullohs in the Danish Factory after all. It was humiliating, but what else could one do?

Unable to get at their boxes, which were in the gangway where savages sat upon them, they desperately gathered together a few valuables and prepared to run the gauntlet.

'Expecting a strict search and being desirous of rescuing something out of the general wreck, Mr. Fay contrived to conceal our watches in my hair, having first stopped their going by sticking pins in their wheels; and the little money we possessed and what small articles I could take without exciting suspicion were concealed about my person. Thus equipped, I crawled out, *bent double* with fever, and in an instant the Cabin was filled with Seapoys. I must here pause and intreat my dear sister to imagine herself in my situation at that *dreadful* moment; for no language can I find that would do justice to my feelings.

'But when I came on deck, the scene which presented itself would have appalled the stoutest heart; mine already weakened by grief and apprehension could not withstand it. A sudden burst of tears alone saved me from fainting. The poor sailors were so distracted that many of them could scarcely be restrained from jumping overboard to escape slavery;—sometimes crying for their wages and asking their Officers to pay them; who incapable of affording any consolation walked about like men bereft of reason; no wonder, since this fatal event would, to say the least, occasion them the loss of twelve months pay, exclusive of their private ventures.'

Worse was to follow. The abominable Ayres ordered them to go on shore at once, without clothes or bedding, and when they were down in the boat the sepoys had the impertinence to throw some fireworks at Eliza—'several half extinguished Blue Lights, the smoke of which from the rancid oil and the abominable rags used in their composition almost stifled me.' The rain drenched her, the wind buffeted, the surf grew so high that the boat could not land, and she was obliged to transfer in mid-harbour into a canoe 'scarcely bigger than a butcher's tray.' From that receptacle she was emptied violently upon the coast of Malabar, and so

great was the shock of her arrival that a pin fell out of a watch in her hair. The sound of the ticking nearly drove her crazy. But the watch stopped again in a moment, for, like herself, it was drenched with the salt water. 'Compare,' she says to her dear ones, 'compare this account with the many flattering conversations we have held together on the subject of my arrival in India. What a difference !'

Yes, what a difference ! The expression is not too strong. India ought, anyhow, to be sunny, and full of elephants. She lay on the streaming wet sand, under a tempestuous dawn, her boxes lost, her boat lost ; her goose of a husband lay beside her, and before they could stagger to their feet they were arrested.

II.

Safe in the Danish Factory, the other passengers paid little attention to the Fays' misfortunes, and it was not till the afternoon that Mr. Hare strolled round to condole. Meanwhile, several additional disasters had occurred. They had been dragged into the presence of the Governor of Calicut, who had contemplated them for an hour without speaking, and finally muttered into his hookah that they were to be imprisoned in the deserted English Factory— a place without chairs, tables, or any beds except the floor. They were hurried there through the rain, amid the jeers of the populace. They fell asleep, out of exhaustion, on a heap of rubbish, and awoke to find venomous reptiles all around them, 'perhaps a hundred scorpions and centipedes . . . had I moved hand or foot what might have been the consequences ?' When they had reached the climax of misery, Mr. Hare was announced, and made a long speech. He pointed out to them how excessively foolish they had been to stop upon the ship, because now everyone suspected them—Orientals are naturally suspicious and the Danish Consul himself had thought it strange. They would lose their luggage and probably be detained for weeks. He continued in a lighter vein :

'Endeavouring to turn our situation into ridicule, he offered to convey letters from us to Bengal ; pretended to be in raptures with the fine view of the Sea from our Veranda which I hinted to him he might still have time to admire at his leisure, though he affected to be certain of leaving Calicut in a few hours. At length he concluded by advising me to address a *tender* memorial to Hyder Ally, whose general character for gallantry would not admit of his refusing any request made by a *fair* lady. This was wonderfully witty in the speaker's opinion, as you may conceive how *fair*

the lady in question looked. How a man could break a jest on a creature so bowed down by affliction, I know not ; but I envy not his feelings.'

Mr. Hare then withdrew, and hatched a hideous plot. He suggested to Ayres the renegade that the Fays should be sent up country and fed upon dry rice : ' he will then be soon glad to enlist, I warrant you, the person in question not being of sufficient importance for the English to reclaim him solemnly : especially as he came out without leave.' The plot failed ; indeed, Mr. Hare's confidences ultimately led to his own downfall. For, anxious to impress the ex-highwayman, he boasted of his wealth and importance. Not for nothing had Ayres the appearance of a crow. He listened to the description of the valuable luggage that remained on board, and he bided his time.

The Fays possessed about twenty-five pounds in sequins. They durst not keep money on them lest they were searched ; where, then, should it be concealed ? Mr. Fay had an idea, and of course it miscarried. When the visitor had gone, he took the watches out of his wife's hair, also the sequins, and stuffed the lot into an old glove, which he hid in a ' snug place ' on the veranda. The plan seemed sensible, but it reckoned without the Indian climate. During the night the veranda was twitched off the house by a gale, and completely disappeared. It had flown like a magic pavilion in the arms of a jinn. The catastrophe was so unexpected, and, from the Blackheath standpoint, so impossible, that Mr. Fay collapsed. His wife pulled herself together, and began to think. She calculated the direction of the monsoon, and reasoned that if she could get round to the other side of the house the treasure might be recovered. Many sepoys were on guard, but they kept together, as sepoys will, partly to make a good show when the Governor passed, and partly for the sake of company. When they were not looking, and when Mr. Fay was completely absorbed by his misfortune, she stole off and opened a back door. There was the flying veranda, at rest in a little garden. The grass was high and wet, but she waded about, and in the midst of a deep tuft she found the glove intact. What joy ! But joy is ever followed by sorrow. She was so delighted with the garden, and so fond of fresh air, that next day she took a walk in it for pleasure, was detected by the sentinel, and hurt herself against the door in the hurry of her retreat. She grew so unwell that even Captain Ayres pitied her. Her reflections became melancholy. Why was

she imprisoned? On what charge? What harm had she done Hyder Ali? And why—oh! why—had she ever left Blackheath? Yet she could not help being interested in India; it was an odious country, but a fascinating one, and in the depths of woe she still retained two priceless possessions—her belief in Providence and her command of the epistolary style.

Providence took action after ten days' delay. Mr. Hare, Mr. and Mrs. Tulloh, and the other passengers were dramatically dashed to the ground. They were arrested in the Danish Consulate for no reason, marched with the usual contumely through the streets of Calicut, and flung into the arms, or, must we say, the talons, of Eliza.

'God forbid that I should generally speaking be capable of rejoicing in the miseries of my fellow creatures, even when they merit punishment, but I must own (blame me if you will) that for a short time I *did* feel satisfaction in this stroke of retributive justice. It was certainly a curious sight to behold them, after all their airs of superiority, reduced to take up their residence with us. Although, like many others in the world, they were able to support their neighbours' misfortunes with stoical firmness, and even render them a source of amusement, each readily discovered when personally attacked by a similar calamity that close imprisonment is by no means a proper subject on which to exercise wit.

'The ways of providence are inscrutable! But to revert to my main subject;—glad shall I be when it is concluded, for I detest matter of fact *writing* almost as much as matter of fact conversation;—yet this story must be told in my own way, or not at all.'

Providence was still a moral rather than a practical force. The arrival of the other passengers, however delightful to witness, increased the discomfort at the English Factory, and the disputes were continuous. 'Ah, my dear sister, I was at this time ill enough to be laid up on a sick bed and carefully nursed, yet I was thankful for such food as I should once have loathed, and I still continued to lie on my rattan couch, without a pillow or any covering except my clothes, and surrounded by people whom my very heart sickened to behold.' And the weather remained appalling. Storms of rain and wind shook the house and danced the ship up and down in the bay. The Governor of Calicut could be seen walking on the beach, 'anxiously watching the vessel, praying to Mahomet, and from time to time casting up the sand

towards Heaven,' for if she was wrecked he would be punished by Hyder Ali. All the luggage remained aboard, and the other passengers, less hardened to the blows of Fate, hoped to regain their belongings when the sea calmed. Eliza knew better. She awaited the *dénouement* with cynicism.

By the time the boxes were landed at the custom-house, everyone, including the Governor, had forgotten whether there was a war with England or not. The passengers were guilty of some crime or other, that was all he remembered; and Ayres had told him they were very rich. He ordered them to unpack in his presence. The Fays had nothing to unpack. What the sepoys had not stolen, the water had spoilt. But Hare and the Tullohs, who had kept most of their stuff in the hold, had the pleasure of seeing it again for a few moments. Which articles, the Governor inquired, did they claim as 'personal'? If they answered calmly, the article was sometimes handed over to them; if they showed emotion, it was always confiscated. When Mr. Hare's turn arrived, he was in a ludicrous state. 'Not a single tooth-pick case, knife or knee buckle was produced but what he declared had been received as a pledge of friendship from different relations; parents, brothers, sisters, male and female cousins to the utmost verge of propinquity, all put in their claims,' while Eliza, like a disembodied and avenging spirit, watched his pangs. She particularly relished the tragedy of the Venetian fiddle strings. Poor Mr. Hare (for he is poor by this time) appears to have been musical, and when the packet of strings appeared he burst out to Tulloh, who did the interpreting, 'For heaven's sake! my dear friend—oh! for heaven's sake! endeavour to preserve this parcel for me; for, should it be taken, I am an undone man, for I shall never be able to replace the contents. Let them take my clothes, my law books, everything except this.' The Governor ordered the packet to be opened, and thought the owner had gone mad. And a shriek of despair arose from Hare, for 'the remorseless waves (which are neither respectors of persons or things) had pervaded this invaluable treasure and rendered it wholly useless.' And the violin, for which the strings were intended, was in even worse plight, for one of the soldiers had stamped through it. 'I leave you to form what ideas you may think proper on the subject of the extravagant sorrow such a character was likely to exhibit, and pass on to matter more interesting.'

So will we, for really she is going a little too far.

III.

All this time Mr. Fay had in his pocket a letter of introduction to one of the leading merchants of Calicut. Why he did not present it at once is a mystery, but then so is most human conduct. When he and his wife were reduced to the last extremity of misery, and their fellow-passengers levelled with them in the dust, this introduction occurred to his mind. It was to a Jew, and perhaps this had deterred him; for 'the Children of Israel often evince more acuteness than delicacy in their transactions.' He applied to Captain Ayres for permission to go out and deliver it, and Ayres (for no one acts consistently) was sympathetic, spoke well of old Isaac, and bade him God-speed. The merchant received him most kindly, and sent Mrs. Fay a present 'which in our situation was truly valuable, consisting of a catty of fine tea, a tea-pot, and a tea-kettle.' The present caused yet another quarrel in the Factory, for, 'although these things were expressly sent to me, yet Mrs. Tulloh and her party seized the kettle and forcibly kept it, so that I was forced to make my tea by boiling it in my pot.' The intercourse with Isaac went no further for a time, but it was a comfort to know that there was one righteous man in that cruel and insane city; and if the ladies had not quarrelled over a tea-kettle they would have found something else.

An interval elapses.

'I will here by way of relaxation transcribe a few passages from my Journal, as nothing happened for some time worthy of a particular recital:—reserving to myself, however, the option of resuming the narrative style whenever I shall deem it necessary.

'23rd November, 1779.—Mrs. Tulloh being taken ill of a fever, application was made to the Governor for medicines, but this happening to be a high festival, he, like the Pharisees in Scripture, refuses to profane it by doing good.—Should the woman die in the interim, what cares he?

'25th November.—The Governor sent fifty rupees to pay our debts, all of which Tulloh kept. Mem.: the lady is better.

'30th November.—I have now a lamentable tale to relate. We were this morning hurried away at a moment's warning to the Fort, and crowded together in a dark place scarcely twenty feet square, swarming with rats, and almost suffocating for want of air. Mr. and Mrs. Tulloh secured a small room for themselves, but my husband and I were obliged to pass the night among our companions in misery—rats continually gnawing the feet of my couch, whose perpetual squeaking would have prevented

sleep had our harrassing reflections permitted us to court its approach. . . .

And, resuming her narrative style, she goes on to describe a loft up above, which she thought would be better than the common-room, but which proved to be worse, for there were bats in it as well as rats. Her husband again collapsed, and shrieked in the night that he was being attacked by evil spirits; she 'could not help laughing,' for, however much she suffers, she never loses her sense of the ludicrous, and it is this that gives distinction to her character, and rescued her from oblivion.

The passengers had been transferred to the Fort in order to release the sepoys who were guarding the Factory. Some war or other seemed probable. Robbed of everything, they were becoming an expense to the Governor, as the entries in Mrs. Fay's Journal show. The Law of Diminishing Returns was at work, and, since he did not intend to kill them, he was faced with the desirability of letting them go. Hare and company got passports with a little difficulty, and on December 16 set out in palanquins for Seringapatam. They took with them all they could loot out of the common stock, and though they left the tea-kettle behind, it was because their servant forgot it. The Fays, instead of rejoicing in their departure, were much upset—for human nature begins to go queer after a month in prison. To do whatever Mr. Hare did instead of what he didn't do was now their aim; to be left alone seemed the supreme evil. Claiming an audience with the Governor, Mr. Fay demanded passports, and, because they were not ready, became hysterical and attempted to hit his tormentor off the bolster where he squatted. Naturally, he remained unpopular; indeed, it is clear that much of the Fays' troubles in the East proceeded from their own rudeness and ill-breeding. No passports could be granted now; the Governor remarked with dignity that the man was mad, and must remain in prison.

'26th December.—A very melancholy day passed yesterday—for your sakes as well as my own let me hasten to escape by skipping over the dangerous season of Christmas.'

Thus runs the sad little entry; then the narrative style is resumed.

Since passports were withheld, they determined to escape by bribing, and, had Eliza been alone, she would have succeeded; but Mr. Fay bribed the wrong people. The money came from the

English Governor of Tellicherry, who had heard of their plight, and sent them a considerable sum, which they promptly misapplied. They got into touch with two Portuguese—Pereira, who was one of Ayres' officers, and Father Ricardo, a priest. The Father said it was perfectly easy to leave Calicut: one merely walked down to the beach and got into a smuggler's sloop, and for a consideration he would arrange this. And Pereira undertook to let them out of the prison. The attempt was fixed for January 15, and at first all went well.

'When it grew dark, Mr. F. put on a sailor's dress and I equipped myself in a nankeen jacket, a pair of long striped trousers, a man's nightcap, and over that a mighty smart hat with a pair of Mr. F.'s shoes tied on my feet and a stick in my hand. . . . In this dress Mr. F. declared that I was the very image of my dear father, which highly gratified me. I had tied the clothes we took off in a handkerchief; with that in one hand and brandishing my stick in the other, I boldly sallied forth.'

She must have looked fine, but when she reached the shore no smugglers awaited her. The priest had played her false. They slunk back to prison, and had a terrific row with Pereira. He persuaded them to try a second time; again they disbursed money and were fooled, and, disliking their complaints, he went and denounced them to Ayres. Pereira seems the worst of the villains. But he, too, is a muddler, or he would be out of the focus of the story. When denouncing them, he got the date wrong. Ayres replied, 'But that evening was my birthday, and Fay sat with me over a bottle of wine; you are a fool.' They were saved, but they meddled with smugglers no more.

And now good old Isaac the Jew began to bestir himself. We, living a hundred and fifty years after, wonder why he did not do something at once, but probably old Isaac knew what he was about; he resided at Calicut, and we do not. Moreover, we always expect the past to be more logical than the present; we simplify it, draw morals from the simplification, and call the outcome History. Mrs. Fay's letters are not history. They describe what happened—a very different matter. Old Isaac does not descend like a god from a machine: he is just a benevolent dodderer, who manages something at last. In the beginning of February he secures an interview with the Governor (why did he not do this three months before?), and gets leave to send away the Fays in one of his boats to Cochin, where they have a splendid reception from his two wives, banquet amid gold plate and silver spittoons,

and proceed at their leisure to Bengal. Their troubles disappear as mysteriously as they came; the Oriental haze vanishes, and we see, with an equal shock of surprise, the sun. Mrs. Fay's next letter (dated from Cochin) is a great contrast to its enormous predecessor. It is a little paean of joy, a lyric outpour, and the utmost resources of the English language are strained to do old Isaac proud.

'In whatever part of the world and in whatever circumstances my lot may be cast; whether we shall have the happiness to reach in safety the place to which all our hopes and wishes tend, or are doomed again to experience the anxieties and sufferings of captivity; whether I shall pass the remainder of my days in the sunshine of prosperity, or exposed to the chilling blasts of adversity, the name of *Isaac the Jew* will ever be associated with the happiest recollection of my life; and while my heart continues to beat and warm blood animates my mortal frame, no distance of time and space can efface from my mind the grateful remembrance of what we owe to this most worthy of men.

'Oh my dear sister! how can I in the overflowing of a grateful heart do otherwise than lament that the name of this once distinguished people should have become a term of reproach! Exiled from the land promised to the seed of Abraham, they are despised and rejected by every nation in the world. Under such circumstances of mortifying contempt and invidious segregation it is no wonder that occasionally they are disposed to take advantage of those from whom they have endured so much, and it gives me therefore peculiar pleasure to record their good deeds, and to proclaim in my limited circle that a FRANCO and an ISAAC are to be found among the posterity of Jacob.

'These sentiments are not overstrained, but the genuine effusion of a thankful heart; as such receive them.'

She also gives her dear ones a little more information about the other actors. The Governor of Calicut, Ayres, Pereira, and Father Ricardo all came before long to the violent ends they merited, while as for Mrs. Tulloh, 'she has now seen enough, poor woman, to satisfy her taste for adventures, for I am informed that her party took fifteen days to reach Seringapatam, and was then imprisoned twelve days more in a shed.' As for Mr. Fay, she brings him safely round to Calcutta, and she sets him up as a barrister there, but in a year or two she has to take a step that is regrettable rather than surprising: she divorces him and returns in solitude to Blackheath.

That, however, is one of those other stories.

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THE LAWS OF THE COCKPIT

WE have derived our impressions of the cockpit chiefly from the caricaturists, and Hogarth, Gillray and the rest have stamped it for all time as a brutal and degrading pastime. Far be it from my purpose to defend the taste that finds pleasure in the sport of killing, yet in this matter there seems to me to be much of that form of hypocrisy condemned by Hudibras. The modern sportsman who upholds coursing, or professes to believe that the fox enjoys being hunted, will be ready enough to agree that the sporting tastes of our forbears were beastly, and this has probably been the attitude of every generation towards the less sophisticated diversions of a ruder age.

And we may assume that the line of defence against charges of cruelty has always been much the same. The hunting-man can say, and with a measure of truth, that the fox is a vermin doomed to destruction in any case: why not let the manner of its killing give pleasure to many thousands of people, and thereby improve the standard of British horseflesh? In the same spirit the Senate of Imperial Rome might have argued—Here are a number of malefactors condemned to a violent death anyhow: why not let them provide a popular entertainment, and thereby stimulate the martial instincts of the people?

With such a brief one could make out a very good case for cock-fighting. Here is a bird whose every instinct is to fight to the death with its kind. Put two gamecocks within reach, and there is no need to incite one against the other. A natural impulse will urge them to tear each other to pieces, and only the death of one, or both, will separate them. 'It is their nature to,' and who shall say that the most ecstatic moment of a gamecock's life is not in that last furious, full-blooded onslaught on a worthy foe?

Brutal, no doubt, to watch such sport, but at least the contestants are well-matched, have equality of opportunity, and enjoy the fight. This sheer lust for battle has stirred the admiration of the born fighter from the dawn of history, and the gamecock has been synonymous with the love of fighting for fighting's sake.

We have the classic instance of Themistocles, who bade his soldiers take the cock as their symbol, since he fought not for gain,

for applause, nor for country, but for pure enjoyment of the fray. And so 'what was an incitement unto valour at that time to the Athenians, he was disposed to perpetuate as an encouragement to the like bravery.'

In point of antiquity, indeed, cock-fighting may be reckoned amongst the aristocracy of sport. It finds honourable mention in the earliest records of China, and by a dignified descent pursues its way through Persia into the hearts of the Greeks and Romans. That the bellicose nature of the gamecock appealed to the Roman temperament is shown in the special funeral honour bestowed upon the bird. Such marks of esteem have been perpetuated on urns and other survivals of the classic age, and some of these seem to amount to deification.

The educational value of this unquenchable spirit of combat in the gamecock appears also to have been exploited by our rough ancestors, for, according to the reverend and learned Samuel Pegge, an eighteenth-century divine whom I shall have cause to mention again, the first reference to cock-fighting in this country is made by William Fitzstephen in the reign of Henry II, although our Roman masters are supposed to have introduced the sport.

Fitzstephen, then, mentions that schoolboys were encouraged to indulge in the pastime. The cock-fights took place in the schools, and were controlled and directed by the teachers, who, it is inferred, enjoyed themselves as much as their pupils. Obviously we have here the same belief in the stimulating influence of the sport. Hence it is difficult to conjecture the circumstances which brought it into official disfavour in late Plantagenet days, unless it was for the same reasons as made the Puritans frown upon it, as causing an assembly of 'disorderly persons.' This would probably be the cause of it being banned to the populace by the iron government of Henry VIII, for we cannot suppose that consideration for the sufferings of birds entered into Tudor politics, especially as the King built himself a cockpit at Whitehall, and was so addicted to the sport that it was elevated to a 'Royal Diversion.'

And so it continued under the patronage of succeeding monarchs and their circles. Even the pious Roger Ascham, after inveighing against it with his pen, is said 'to have loved it at the last.' Cock-fighting reached its zenith under the Stuarts, the Modern Solomon diverting himself in this fashion 'at least twice a week.' After being condemned by the Puritans as providing pleasure to the godless, it was taken back into Royal favour at the Restoration,

so much so, indeed, that the races at Newmarket were held up until the mains in the cockpit had been fought out.

It is not until the eighteenth century that hard things again begin to be said of the cockpit, and then the voice of the critic is heard in unmeasured severity. For instance, this is how the aforesaid worthy Samuel Pegge reprobates 'the brutality and unchristian spirit of Cocking.' He says :

'Thirty-one cocks are sure to be most inhumanly murdered for the sport and pleasure, the noise and nonsense, nay, I may say, the profane cursing and swearing of those who have the effrontery to call themselves, with all these bloody doings, and with all this impiety about them, Christians.'

Now I suspect that the profanity and swearing offended Mr. Pegge more than the destruction of bird life, because such solicitude is not in keeping with the callous and calculated cruelty of the eighteenth century, when human life was forfeit for the most venial offences, and the weekly hangings at Tyburn were as popular as a First League fixture at Stamford Bridge to-day.

And since I, without having the least sympathy with cock-fighting or the faintest wish to indulge in it, have been led to hold a brief for it, let us see if there is no better justification for it than its appeal to the manly sport of killing.

We have developed some of the finest breeds of poultry in the world. All authorities on the subject are agreed that this state of perfection is the result of centuries of expert mating ; yet it is only in very recent years that the domestic fowl has been carefully reared for the table and for laying. Cocks and hens were the scavengers of the farmyard, and their market price did not pay for special feeding. Indeed, it may be said that it is only since the war that poultry has become a luxury of the rich, and therefore a paying proposition.

Whence, then, comes that perfection of type that distinguishes the best breeds of English fowl ? The answer is not open to dispute. As a rich man's sport, in which high wagers were common, cocking called for the production of the very finest class of birds, just as racing and fox-hunting have of horse and hound. Listen to what so great a poultry authority as Harrison Weir has to say on the matter :

'The very fact of their training, and being fought, demonstrates without any doubt the survival of the strongest, the most hardy,

the most healthy, the best formed, and, in short, the survival of the fittest: indeed, had cock-fighting as a sport never existed, it can scarcely be doubted that such birds as I now write of could not be in evidence, and thus our poultry yards would not have been graced as they now are with a bird as useful to man as it is pre-eminently beautiful.'

As early as 1566, Gervase Markham thus describes the points of the ideal gamecock:

'He should be of middle size: also you shall understand that the best characters you can observe in him are the shape, colour, courage and sharp heel: he should be proud and of upright shape, with a small head like to a spar-hawk, a large quick eye, and a strong beak, crook't and big at the setting-on, and in colour suitable to the plume of his feathers as black, yellow or reddish. The beam of his leg should be very strong, and according to his plume, blue, grey or yellow, his spurres long, rough and sharpe, a little bending and looking inwards.'

Lest it should be thought that all this care was lavished only on the cock-bird, let me say that the points of the hen were considered of even more importance in selection for breeding. Nor were the laurels of the pit reserved exclusively for the male warrior. History records that the gamehen was the equal in tenacity and courage with the cock. In fact, to quote Markham again, 'if she have weapons she is better.'

And this brings me to another aspect of cocking. No factor has been so fiercely denounced as the artificial spur, and to the modern mind at least the idea is utterly repugnant. Yet the metal spur has had its defenders, even on the score of mercifulness. The arguments used have been that the deadly aids shortened the combats, and put all birds on an equality, which was not the case with the natural weapons. Young cocks, for instance, would be at a disadvantage opposed to older birds by reason of their spurs being less tough.

The artificial spur has, too, the sanction of antiquity, for Aristophanes has a reference to its use, and the Greeks are elsewhere said to have put a cap, called a *telum*, on the spurs. It was not apparently employed, however, at an early stage of the sport in this country, for Markham observes 'that having so far prepared your cock by trimming, you shall with the knife scrape his spurs to points, and then put him down to try his fortune.' But when

the cockpit became a 'Royal Diversion,' the making of the metal spurs grew to be something of a fine art, the most meticulous precision being required in the shape, curve, and fitting. They were sometimes made of brass or iron, but silver and steel of the highest temper were essential to a 'smart' function.

Some curious facts are on record respecting the sensitiveness of cocks to the class of metal worn by an antagonist. If a seasoned fighter, for example, were armed with silver spurs, it has been known to 'turn, as craven, from steel,' though both sets of spurs were of similar make and size. Harrison Weir says that this peculiarity was so well known that when a match was made 'the terms used were for steel or silver.'

There remains to be considered the demoralising influence of cocking, as alleged by its critics. Did the sport degenerate into the disreputable and bestial gatherings such as are depicted by Hogarth and others? It is likely that cock-fighting did attract the lawless and brutal elements of the community, just as prize-fighting and the race-course did, and continue to do when conditions favour them. But it is easy to be misled in such matters by the extravagance of the caricaturist. Even a serious representation like Frith's 'Derby Day' is very strained in treatment, and seeks the bizarre rather than the typical.

So it was, we may suppose, with the cockpit. If the meetings frequently degenerated into rowdyism, it was not due to the absence of laws to enforce decency and fairplay. And that this was not merely the case at select gatherings held under patrician auspices, I can produce evidence to show.

Among a number of old family deeds, dating back to the first quarter of the eighteenth century, I have come across a complete list of the 'Articles and Orders of Cocking.' The quality and condition of the parchment upon which these regulations are written, as well as the phraseology and penmanship, are identical with the dated documents amongst which they have been preserved, so that there can be no question as to their age and genuineness. Moreover, the deeds are concerned with the transfer of lands in a remote part of Carmarthenshire (Llandovery and Myddvai to wit), which about the year 1708 must have been as far apart from the world of fashion and progress as any corner of the British Isles.

On the other hand, it may be assumed that cock-fighting had an assured position among Welsh national sports from the fact

that one of the most approved forms of contest in the cockpit was called the 'Welsh Main.' This was more in accord with modern notions of sport than the 'Battle Royal,' in which an unlimited number of birds were pitted and left to slaughter one another until one survived as victor. The 'Welsh Main' was conducted on the lines of present-day competitions. A number of cocks, say sixteen, would be paired to fight in the first round. The eight winners would meet each other in the second round, then the four remaining, and last the two finalists.

The 'Articles and Orders of Cocking,' which I am about to reproduce in full and with the original wording and spelling, show the same superior sense of sportsmanship, and also a fastidious regard for good behaviour and fair conditions. There are twenty-one regulations in all, and they appear in the following order :

(1) *IMPRIMIS* it is agreed that every man having cocks to fight shew and put them with faire Hacket not to noses shorne or cut under upon paine of florfeiting for every time soe offending, Three shillings four pence And his cock to be put by for fighting that yeare.

(2) Item that every cock matched shall fight as he is first shewed in the pit without shearing or cutting any feathers afterwards to disadvantage on paine of every time soe offending Ten shillings.

(3) Item it is ordered by the Cockers that noe cock is to be fought with a silver Gavelock except it be the shape of a Cockspur.

The significance of this rule is not clear to me. It would be interesting to learn from some sporting antiquarian why a 'silver' spur alone is specified.

(4) Item that every cock that cometh to setting to before he loose the Battle and shall refuse to fight ten times, that is to say, First six times set to by the friends of each cock and then Four times after by the enemy of the cock that is likely to winne, Which order shall be kept untill one of them hath refused to fight soe Ten times set to likewise, when those two cocks shall have been tymes soe set together as aforesaid And neither cock doth in the said times fight or peck, Then a fresh cock to be held and set to each cock And if one fight and the other refuse, Then the fighting cock to winne, and the refusing cock to loose, And if the aforesaid cocks do both fight, then to be a drawn battle.

(5) Item when cocks are far spent and come to setting together It is ordered they shall be set to as followeth That is to say Bill to Bill if they both see If either be blind the blind cock to touch

If either be drawn neckt Then his head to be held faire and to be set to the other cock, Soe that the party doe his best in setting to make his cock to fight, Provided that after they come to be set thus as aforesaid, before and every such setting to, they shall stay untill one toe twenty before they set toe again, untill the Law of six times be forth Then to tell but ten times :

(6) Item it is ordered That when a cock is soe hurt That any in the pit will lay Ten pounds to five shillings Then after the cocks fighting shall first set toe and noe man will take that lay Then the battle to be adjudged won on the cock's side the odds is on :

(7) Item if a man att any time sitting out of the Ringe shall make any noyse or Rule of fowle play without any cause or any controversies when they neither should speake or give their judgmt And shall not become silent, the Bell being rung, the party soe offending shall pay for every such offence Five shillings :

(8) Item That noe man shall make any cavill or speech of matching of cocks either to the Matchers or owners of the cocks after the cocks be once put together, upon paine of five shillings :

(9) Item That if any man shall sweare and Blaspheme Gods Holy name to the great offence of God and the Hearers, He shall for every such oath pay One shilling But if he shall after Admonicon herof given unto him, wilfully and contemptuously sweare in contempt of God, those orders, and the Company then present, Then the party in this cause soe wilfully offending to pay for every such offence Three shillings and four pence :

These precautions against unseemly behaviour are drastic enough to convince the most exacting critic. If similar penalties were inflicted to-day on an explosive golfer in a round of eighteen holes, golf would be made prohibitive except to the very rich or very mild. The safeguards against cheating or defaulting, as we shall see, are sterner in proportion to the offence.

(10) Item if there be any Battle made fraudulently to the intent to cozen or deceive any man to their great hindrance and discredit of their sport, The party soe offending, convicted and condemned by the Masters appointed, shall for every such offence forfeit forty shillings, which if the offender soe convicted shall refuse to pay, Then he to be banished the pit, and never allowed to come there again :

(11) Item all losses in the cockpit be presently layd downe at the end of every Battle before any other be fought, or else that the party wining be satisfied before the party loosing shall goe forth the Doore, And also that every man pay good and current money :

And now note the severity with which abuse and violence are visited on the offender.

(12) Item that no man shall call another knave or use any such unseemly terms, to the offence of the company and troubling of the sport upon paine of forfeiting for every time soe offending five shillings :

(13) Item that noe man shall strike or draw weapon to strike any man upon payne of forfeiting every time soe offending Fourty shillings :

(14) Item whosoever they be that shall put any lay to judgment being in variance they shall stake down the money layd on either side, and sixpence a piece over And the party That is adjudged to be in the wrong shall pay his lay and loose his sixpence, PROVIDED, That every man speak freely before Judgment what he thinks thereof And if any man speak afterwards, he shall for every such offence in speaking pay sixpence for making variance :

(15) Item if any hath made a lay, and cannot tell or call to mind with whom he laid such lay, Then if he desire openly in the pit That the party with whom he layd, would give him the one halfe of the sum, If he does not confesse the lay and give him soe demanding, It SHALBE lawfull for any to tell him with whom he layd that lay, And the party to pay the whole lay because he did not confesse and give him the one halfe, PROVIDED That no man may tell before the pay he is contented to take as aforesaid, But if any man doe tell him before then the party soe telling is to pay the lay :

(16) Item if any shall lay more money than he hath to pay or can satisfy the party with whom he layd either by his credit or some other friendly word The which if he cannot doe he is to be put in a Basket to be provided for this purpose and to be hanged up in the Basket in some convenient place, in the Cockpit, That all men may Know him all the time of the Play that day :

This sixteenth rule strikes me as the gem of the collection. As a method of suppressing the defaulting backer and the 'welcher,' it has much to recommend it. Next we come to more direct evidence that good order was maintained at cocking meetings, even if the democratic spirit is lacking.

(17) Item IT IS ORDERED That all persons of the better ranks and quality, COCKERS, COCKMASTERS, GAMESTERS, such as are appointed to set to cocks, and put them faire in, and none others without permission of the Master of the Pit shall sit in the lower ring, and that the said Master of the Pit shall have authority at all times to remove such as he thinks not meete, in the lower or second ring And also to make room for those of the better sort, And to place them there, att his pleasure and according to his discretion :

(18) Item IT IS ORDERED That all controversies That may arise or come by means of the sport of Cocking or Cock fighting upon any of the orders above written or otherwise betweene party and party shalbe determined by the Master of the Pit where the said controversy did arise with six or four of the antients and best experienced Gamesters there, being called by the consent of both parties to assist him therein :

(19) Item That if Two Cocks being drawn together, and thought by the greater part of the Matchers appointed to be a faire Battaile, and yet the Owner of one of those cocks shall wilfully refuse to fight his cock where he was matched Then if any man will give to the party six shillings and eight pence for his cock and play him where he was matched, the said party shall be compelled to part with his cock, for that Battaile, And the Battle being ended to have his cock againe if soe he thinke fitt for tenn shillings :

(20) Item for the better observation of all these orders before written IT IS ORDERED and agreed That if any person shall offend in any of the premises, he presently pay his forfeiture, the which being adjudged, if he shall refuse to doe, then ye party soe refusing to be banished untill he pay the forfeiture by him soe committed or the parties by him soe offended :

(21) Item IT IS Ordered that all the Forfeitures above said shalbe equally divided, The moyety thereof to be paid to the Poor of the Parish and the other Moyety to be distributed and disposed off as the Master of the Pit shall think fit, unto such poore Feeders and antient Breeders of Cocks as are or shalbe decayed or in want :

These regulations may have been seldom observed to the letter in actual practice, and to that extent the caricaturists may have been faithful in what they portrayed. Nevertheless, the standard of conduct imposed by such a code does indicate a sincere desire to keep cocking an honourable and clean sport. As they affect the birds themselves also, the rules reveal a conscientious effort to make the conditions as fair and as little revolting as the natural brutality of the display would permit. In any case, the light these 'Articles and Orders' throw upon an old-world pastime, remembered only in its ugliest aspects, may serve as a mild antidote to the hasty generalisations which have produced so much bad history. That object has alone been responsible for the present article.

EDWIN OLIVER.

A FLOWER-MAKER IN SHOREDITCH.

BY SYDNEY K. PHELPS.

If you will come with me to Shoreditch, and let me tap at the half-underground window of a house I know, I will show you where and how some of the flowers which adorn your hats are made.

Here lives a friend of mine, an old woman getting very near the eighties, who has made artificial flowers all her life, and makes them still, when trade is not too bad. The last job on which I found her engaged was that of making little pink roses ; they were shaded, so the petals had to be arranged in tiers, and each of the four tiny divisions of each petal had to be gophered with a hot iron, in order to give a soft undulation to the surface. Hundreds of the little flowers lay on her table, drawn close to the window, and thousands more, already finished, were packed in boxes ; these would be twisted, later on, into wreaths by another hand.

'Is it good work or bad ?' I asked, when we had exchanged greetings.

'Bad. They used to be eightpence a gross ; now they're down to sixpence. And they take a lot of paste. That's up, though the flowers are down. I give half-a-crown for the gum I used to get for sixpence ; and you know what flour is.'

'But is not paste provided ?'

'Ought to be. The law says so. But what's the use of that ? He won't give no paste. I told him he'd be in trouble about it one day, but he only laughed.'

'He' is the employer from whom she gets her work.

My old friend loves flowers—real flowers—so I took her a bunch of daffodils, of the sort which were once described as 'of amber and cool ivory.' She arranged them in water, and gazed at them lovingly.

'You'd think I had a thousand a year to see them,' she said. 'And the millions of them that I've made in my time, too. Very teasy things to make ; you have to have a wool mould for the cups of them and put in the little threads in the centre, and crinkle the edges of the cups, and put on the flying leaves separate. I used to get half-a-crown a gross for them, but work as you might, you

couldn't earn much. I reckon my working days then were fifteen hours.'

'That would not suit people to-day.'

'Suit 'em!' she snorted. 'Why, I watch 'em. I see the men that sweeps the streets, and get, so they tell me, four pounds ten a week. 'Tis a little brush to the right, and one to the left, and then they're tired and have to lean on their brooms and talk till they feel better. Why, I can't look at them without the sweat pouring off me, to see such idleness.'

My friend is a politician and a philosopher. Her political opinions are tinged with the desire to send all foreigners to their own countries, and to prohibit the importation of artificial flowers on the ground that they are 'convent and prison made.' As a philosopher she maintains that enduring hardness, when it does not kill, teaches life.

'The fuss some folk make about parting with their bits of sticks,' she said. 'And I've had to sell up my home, so I know. But what's things? That's not what counts.'

'When did you have to sell up your home?'

'Years and years ago, when my husband died, and left me with three. One of 'em was a baby, not a fortnight old; and he died before the month was out. I went to the people I got work from then, and said "Give me work—anything." "Must it be at home?" "Yes, there's the children, two alive and one dead." He had his feelings, that man had; he turned away, but he gave me work. And there for the week my baby lay dead I sat and did it, and earned enough for the funeral.'

We were silent for a minute or two, perhaps because we also 'had our feelings.' Then she went on—

'Folks is strange. That funeral now. I was that worn out that I could hardly hold up my head. We came back, and I sat in a chair. One of the children pulled a little chair close, and was leaning on me; the other lay down on the hearth-rug. I suppose we all fell asleep. When I woke up, there was no one there, no one but me and the children; the rest had all left me. Queer, wasn't it?'

And then her eyes filled with tears, and I knew she was not crying for herself, not for the old woman of seventy-eight, but for the young widow who woke to find that no one could watch with her one hour.

'But it teaches,' she said.

'If only it does not make one hard.'

'No, I'm not hard, but I wonder when folk trouble so about things. 'Tisn't tables and chairs that matter. 'Tisn't them you want. 'Tis someone to see—to talk to. It's lonely. That's why I must work as long as I can see to do it. I should go mad if I had nothing to do but think. And if I can earn only four or five shillings a week, it makes all the difference, with coal at three and a penny halfpenny a hundred.'

I should say it did make all the difference, for otherwise her income is only twelve and sixpence a week, and how on that she keeps her fine soul attached to her worn body is more than I know.

As she thought of her own past, and of those she had lost, her mind took a strange twist.

'Do you believe it?' she asked. 'That what some say—that after we're gone we have to come back and do it all over again.'

'You mean that we have to be born again into this world?'

'Yes. In ways it seems fair, for some have all the trouble, or it looks like it. But I don't know that I want it. I think I'd rather just go to sleep, same as getting into bed here, with the work done, and not to have to wake in the morning with the rheumatics to pain me.'

I think she will have her wish. I believe she will lie down to sleep one night, with her work done, and will wake in the morning where there is no more pain.

ADVENTURES IN PRINTING HOUSE SQUARE.

BY BENNET COPPLESTONE (F. HARCOURT KITCHIN).

III. MOBERLY BELL.

THE Manager's Room, far removed from the Editorial quarters, was situated in that part of the buildings which adjoined the private house of the Walters. It was approached by the main entrance in the Square itself, above which has been built into the wall a Commemorative Tablet setting forth the services of *The Times* to the City of London upon an occasion of bygone moment. One mounted a flight of wooden stairs, at the top of which a door stood wide open.

Moberly Bell sat with his back to the wall facing this open door, in front of him a big roll-top desk. At the sound of a step upon the threshold of his room he would thrust his great head round a corner of the desk and glare upon the intruder like some lion disturbed at his meal. His eyes gleamed with an alert combative challenge which comes out in nearly all photographs of him. If the intruder were unauthorised and undesired the jaws of Moberly Bell would snap, and then one would hear the hurried scramble of flying feet down that wooden staircase. But if he who entered through that ever open door were welcome, even though unexpected, the lion's eyes would soften and a delightful welcoming smile break the clean line of the firm lips. When I first knew Moberly Bell he wore a ragged moustache, but later on he shaved clean and so remained, with his fine humorous mouth fully revealed, until the day of his death.

Even in the early days of the 'nineties I felt the significance of that ever open door, in front of which Moberly Bell worked at his desk, and contrasted his proud accessibility with the seclusion of the Editor's Room behind the swing-door in Printing House Square. It was no petty pride of station which removed the Editor by so wide a space from personal contact with the humble ones of his staff; when I came to know him better I perceived how modest and retiring this truly great man was; it was an unhappy instinct, born of shyness, which had grown into a habit, engrained into the fibre of the man. Moberly Bell was a proud man, with the splendid

hauteur of a fighter who scorned all the defences which less combative men set about them as a guard against surprisal. He was like a knight of old who placed a shield without his tent for the convenience of challengers who dared to strike it with their sharp spear points. There was no secretary's room, established as a defensive outwork, to warn Moberly Bell of the approach of an enemy and to hold that enemy in check. He sat there before his open door, wholly unprotected save by his high spirit and his joyous love of battle for its own sake. It meant a great deal for the lowly ones of Printing House Square that access to the great Manager—we always called Moberly Bell 'The Manager,' heedless of his titular designation—that access was never denied to them, on sufficient cause being shown. And more often than not, unless he were absorbed in one of those long fighting letters which he loved to write with his own hand, or unless he were talking as he loved to talk through the telephone, he would welcome us and invite us to come in with that challenging glare gone from his eyes and a winning smile playing about his lips.

This accessibility of his, tempered by the snap of the savage jaws when an intruder really was an intruder, involved for him severe penalties. A great part of his working day—which was unrestricted by any formal hours—was occupied by visitors, by telephone calls, and by those unending letters of which there must be thousands buried now in the copying books of his Grand Viziership in Printing House Square. Many of his interviews with callers were of the highest importance, which only he could have held, but many others could have been taken from him by a competent secretary or by a Deputy Manager. Many of the telephone conversations, in which he delighted, and perhaps three-quarters of his daily letters, might with great relief to his time and energies have been entrusted to lesser men. But I am quite sure that in the 'nineties, and in the early years of the new century, no secretary—and no Deputy Manager—would have been permitted by Moberly Bell to relieve him of a fraction of the work which he loved. He was one of those men who always want to do everything themselves, the small things no less ardently than the great things. A show run by Moberly Bell could not be other than a one-man-show.

He simply could not delegate his functions—he had no scrap of an idea of how to set about it—and in all his attempts at organisation this cardinal defect appears. He did not, and could not from the very nature of him, perceive that no one could manage *The*

Times by himself any more than one man could edit *The Times* by himself. G. E. Buckle, though he possessed few of the natural gifts of an organiser, drew nearer to the heart of the matter than ever did Moberly Bell. For Buckle accepted the traditional delegation to Moberly Bell of the editorial management, and allowed to his Assistant Editors and departmental advisers a large measure of individual responsibility. Moberly Bell would delegate nothing which he could possibly keep to himself. When I was Assistant Manager to him—as Managing Director—I had no clearly defined functions. I just tore out of Bell's hands everything which I could, and told him what I had done after it had been done. It was with difficulty that I persuaded him to read copies of the letters which I had dispatched in his name. He would glare at me, say that I had exceeded my authority—which was, or was not, very often what I chose to make it—and then laugh. 'I always told you, Kitchin,' he would say, 'that I was an impossible man to work with.'

Among a few characteristic letters of his which I had the gumption to keep—I foolishly destroyed most of them as they were received—is one dated July 1907, at a time when the coming events were already casting their shadows over Printing House Square. A change of proprietary was impending by Order of the Court of Chancery—though it had not yet been formally delivered—and it had been agreed between us that I was to become his chief assistant. This letter so clearly reveals his own consciousness of his defects in the capacity to delegate that I quote some passages here: 'I think I'm a bad man to help. I have not the genius of throwing work on to other people, but perhaps you can teach me and I'm quite willing to try. The fact is I want more time for "pottering"—for comparing *The Times* with other papers which now I never see—for reading more closely *The Times* itself. I have by no means too much to do but I have little time to think. If only someone could see the people who come to see me, or do half the talking over the telephone. Meanwhile, enjoy your holiday and employ part of it in devising a scheme for increasing the circulation!'

That last sentence was as characteristic of Bell as was the earlier part. That was his one great obsession, which absorbed him by day and by night: a scheme which would increase the circulation of *The Times*. All his schemes between 1902 and 1908 were inspired by that one ever-present necessity: how to increase

the circulation. All the editorial reforms, of which I shall write, were directed towards this one essential end. For Moberly Bell knew—and the knowledge turned his blood cold—that *The Times* of his boundless devotion was dying at the heart for want of circulation. It was perishing of newspaper anaemia.

Moberly Bell's passion for telephoning always prevented me from taking any calls off his hands. Most men like to get away from their offices at some time, but Bell was not happy unless he had a telephone instrument at his bedside, so that he could ring up the Square at any time in the night up to about four A.M. At first he used an ordinary extension from the public line, but, later, when Lord Northcliffe—who also loved telephones—suggested that a private wire should be laid on from Printing House Square to Park Crescent, Moberly Bell leaped at the idea and turned his house into a miniature Exchange.

He could never be commonplace. Every letter of his, even the most rapid scribble, had some flavour in it of the man's wit. I always remember with joy a stock reply of his which was sent out to those who grumbled because *The Times* would not guarantee the advertisers in its columns. They seemed to think that the advertisements published by *The Times* should be as impartially accurate as its news. Bell's stock answer ran somewhat as follows: 'We always reject the advertisements of those whom we know to be disreputable and take care that no announcements in our columns shall be blasphemous, libellous, or indecent. But it is quite impossible for us to guarantee our advertisers. For example, if a woman advertises for a situation and states that she is a Good Plain Cook, it is clearly beyond the power of *The Times* to guarantee that she is either Good or Plain.'

I do not know why Moberly Bell, even in my early days, treated me in a manner so different from his reputed attitude towards most of the other minor members of his big staff. He not only permitted me to establish myself in the City Office, as I have told, but when I came at his suggestion to Printing House Square he encouraged me to roam almost at will about the departments. I was nominally a member of Number Seven, the Home Sub-editors' room, yet I worked upon occasion—there were many occasions—as Foreign Sub-editor, as Night Secretary to the Editor, and more especially as Day Secretary. From the first I was the inevitable deputy to Wynnard Hooper, the City Editor, and Financial Assistant Editor to Mr. Buckle, because I was the only man in Printing House

Square, when Hooper was away, who understood the technicalities of the City Office. Moberly Bell's attitude of kindly favour towards me, a beginner, may have been due to a recognition of qualities in me which, at a far distance, resembled like qualities in himself. I had in me enough of his own combativeness to stick up to him, and he loved an opponent, however humble, who would stick up to him. Then, too, I had a sense of humour and a turn for persiflage which flashed in response to his own keen humour—and a battle of wits was a rich feast for which he always hungered. I do not know why he was so sympathetic towards my early aspirations—unless it were from that inherent kindliness of him which for most of his staff was covered up by his impulsive savagery—but I know very well, and remember as if it had occurred yesterday, the duel between us which for him was but a trifling incident, though for me it marked the definite date from which I reckon the rise in my fortunes at Printing House Square. It was a duel which, from the impetuous attack to the play of sword against sword, and to the gracious salute at the close, first revealed to me Moberly Bell as he really was. From that moment I loved him, and from that moment he began to grant to me—a young man by twenty years his junior—the privilege of his confidence and friendship.

I was acting as deputy to Wynnard Hooper in 1897, and one day a caller upon Moberly Bell—he was one of the many partners in *The Times* as a newspaper—handed to him a dividend notice in a company in which he was interested. Moberly Bell sent this, in the ordinary course, on to me. I prepared the notice for the City columns and sent it out. Now in that notice it was stated that the fixed dividend of, say, five per cent. had been paid upon the preference shares of the Company, and that a dividend of, say, ten per cent. had been declared upon the ordinary shares. Seeing that no company can declare a dividend upon its ordinary shares until the fixed preference dividends have been paid, it was sheer waste of newspaper space to refer to the preference dividend at all. So, in accordance with the invariable and proper practice of the City Office, I gave the ordinary dividend and struck out all mention of the preference dividend. It is always the unexpected that happens, and this correct action of mine brought down upon me the furious wrath of Moberly Bell. It appears that the partner who had given Bell the company notice called next day and lodged a silly complaint. Some of these partners in the private association which owned the copyright of *The Times* took airs to themselves

as 'Proprietors,' and I can appreciate, to some degree, the contemptuous hostility towards many of them of Mr. Walter, the Governing Proprietor. I heard nothing from Bell next day until I arrived home at my flat about one o'clock in the morning—Hooper's job, which I was understudying, was 'an early turn.' Lying on my hall table was a fat letter from Moberly Bell, a perfectly frightful letter to send to a young man who was no more than a beginner on his staff. The letter related my offence—the omission of all reference to that preference dividend—and went on to declare the conviction of Moberly Bell that I, whom he had hitherto regarded as one having intelligence, had not only shown the grossest carelessness, but had revealed a stupid incapacity to deal adequately with the smallest and simplest financial paragraph. . . . I won't go on. It was a horrible letter which I burned when the incident was over.

Although I received this letter shortly before turning in, it did not seriously disturb my sleep. I have been granted two inestimable physical blessings: I have always been able to sleep soundly no matter the hour of going to bed, and my obstinate good health and good spirits have rarely been disturbed. My appetite for what we called 'blunchfast' about midday was as hearty as for a normal breakfast. I remained awake long enough to resolve to get home upon that devil of a Manager, even though he might sack me the next instant. If he did I was quite capable of making a comfortable living outside *The Times* office. So next morning I retorted upon Moberly Bell with a coldly polite and devastating letter. I explained the difference between a preference share and an ordinary share, and how the declaration of a dividend on ordinary shares made the mention of preference shares quite superfluous. I pointed out that it was only by keeping the City columns to essentials that we were able to fit the copy to the space—City news was never 'held over to be brought up to date for the Outer Sheet.' I despatched my letter and awaited my fate. It came the next morning at one o'clock A.M. when I got back to my flat. This time it was a very thin letter, and it ran: 'The prisoner is discharged without a stain upon his character. Please come and see me.'

I climbed up the wooden stairs in the forenoon and stood in the entrance to Moberly Bell's room. His great head came round the corner of his desk and his eyes glared at me for a second or two; then he recognised his visitor and laughed. He hauled his big

heavy body out of the chair—Moberly Bell was very heavy and rather lame—he hauled himself up and limped towards me. ‘You were quite right,’ said he; ‘I am very sorry about that letter.’ Then he talked for a minute or two, inquired how I was getting on, and so dismissed me. That was the real Moberly Bell, impetuous, savage, a heavy slaughterer, but as ready to admit defeat when he was wrong as to rejoice in victory. He occupied a great position in social London—and not only at *The Times* office; his pen was a sharp sword which he loved to employ; I was an obscure sub-editor twenty years younger than he. Yet because he had done a rank injustice, even to one so insignificant as a sub-editor, he sent for me and apologised to me in the Manager’s own room. A lesser man would have expressed regret by letter; a small man might have cherished a lasting grudge against me.

I have had many battles since then with that first-class fighting man. It was not possible for anyone to live in close association with Moberly Bell and not to give, or accept, battle at least once a week. Life with Moberly Bell was a constant warfare, yet it was war waged without a trace of personal bitterness. Whether I contrived to pink him, or whether he joyfully skewered me to the floor of his room, made no scrap of difference to our relations. Life was never dull at Printing House Square when there was a Moberly Bell to fight with. Now and then I have felt almost sorry for Mr. Walter. He must have been conscious during all those years from 1890 to 1908 how much he was overshadowed by that great dominating personality who was his titular subordinate. He must have wished many a time that he had left Bell to the comparative obscurity of Egypt.

That little story of my first brush with Moberly Bell illustrates one of our great difficulties in dealing with our formidable manager. Though he administered the editorial side he knew next to nothing of the manner in which the editorial side did its work. He often astonished me by the crudity of his notions. He had never worked in a newspaper office and, though a brilliant writer and special correspondent, had rarely, if ever, handled other men’s copy in the mass. How a daily newspaper was put together he had no notion at all; this was partly due to that unhappy constitution which cut off the *de facto* Manager of *The Times* from all real knowledge of, or control over, the printing department.

Bell’s quite delightful ignorance of what a sub-editor did for his pay was revealed during the hearing of a leading law case of

The Times versus a foreign news agency. This agency, during the war between Japan and China, had 'expanded' its telegrams over generously and had charged *The Times* rates based on the bountiful expansion instead of on the meagre originals. The most striking example of this expansion was the process by which a cable message of two words—'Wei-hai-wei Taken'—grew into a full column of circumstantial and thrilling description. Counsel for the defence tried to establish as a custom of the trade the practice of filling out brief telegraphic messages. He cross-examined Moberly Bell and inquired whether his own staff at *The Times* office did not always, by means of maps and books of reference and expert knowledge, make intelligible telegrams which, in the raw state, would have been unintelligible. Moberly Bell's superb answer thrilled us: 'If a member of *The Times* staff did such a thing as that he would instantly be dismissed.' Of course we did just what Counsel had suggested every night of our lives, and if we had not done just that thing we should have deserved that instant dismissal. We did not 'expand' telegrams; we 'elucidated' them, by inserting precisely what the Correspondent who sent them expected us to insert and did not waste money in telegraphing. It was part of the regular process of making telegrams both accurate and intelligible.

Though English on both sides of the house, and English in tough fibre to the core of his being, this direct, forceful, combative creature, both physically and morally fearless, was by many believed to be of Oriental blood. Possibly the curved beak of his nose, and his long residence in Egypt, may have persuaded the unobservant in national characteristics that there was somewhere an Arab sire in his pedigree. Kennedy Jones, the 'K. J.' of many a stout fight with 'M. B.', put the absurd statement in his book 'Fleet Street and Downing Street' that Moberly Bell was of 'Levantine extraction.' It scarcely needed the prompt correction in *The Times* of Bell's widow to satisfy those who had known him intimately that Moberly Bell was English of the English in blood as in sentiment. And yet the Oriental myth still lingers. I was telling a friend at the Savile Club not long since that I was engaged upon this book. He himself was a newspaper proprietor who must have met Bell. 'Was not Moberly Bell half a Copt?' he inquired. So I suppose that I must tell the Legend of Printing House Square which may, imperfectly rendered, have been the source whence flowed Kennedy Jones's story of Levantine extraction, and my

friend's question about the Copt. I do not know whose was the ingenious mind in which the Legend first had birth ; I fancy that it must have had a mixed parentage, here a little and there a little, until it reached its final and perfect form.

The favourite Legend of Printing House Square in my time was that the powerful and terrifying personage, who sat in the Manager's room, was not the Moberly Bell who was called home from Egypt to become Assistant Manager to Mr. Walter. It was Another. Who ? Let the Legend suffice to answer. Moberly Bell was sent for, and two weeks later a man, bringing his credentials, landed in England and took up office in Printing House Square. The steamer, in which the real Moberly Bell had sailed—it must have had a curious navigator—was wrecked upon the coast of Albania. A High Chief of Albanian brigands hastened from his native hills and scuppered the whole crew. But Moberly Bell, who seemed to offer possibilities of a rich ransom, was held a prisoner. The Chief of Brigands found out who Moberly Bell was and why he was voyaging to London. He knew, as all knew then in the East, the famous *Times Gazeta* of the Crimean War. He perceived that his own huge form and majestic beak were not unlike the form and beak of his prisoner. Need I go on ? He who sat in the Manager's room was the Albanian Brigand who, having thoughtfully slaughtered the real Moberly Bell, had hastened to England to manage the *Times Gazeta* in his place.

I was about to pass on, leaving the Legend of Printing House Square to refresh the minds of my readers with its many beauties, when I remembered that there are dull people still left in the world. So, lest there be those who can comprehend nothing save a direct simple statement, I will declare that the Legend of Printing House Square is wholly without truth ; that the manager of *The Times* was not an Albanian brigand ; he was just that Moberly Bell, *The Times* correspondent in Egypt, who was English of the English of both sides of the house. He was not wrecked on the Albanian coast, he was not taken prisoner, and he was neither murdered nor buried among the Albanian hills. So much for bright legend and dull fact.

Sir Rennell Rodd writes that Lord Kitchener, believed by his admiring fellow-countrymen to be of plain, direct, typically English mind, had acquired through long residence in Egypt a distinctly Oriental twist. He became, Sir Rennell Rodd says, tortuous in his habits of mind and even in his ways. The surprising thing

about Moberly Bell was that, though he had lived in Egypt during the exceedingly Oriental despotic reign of the Khedive Ismail—and was on intimate terms with members of the Khedivial family—the colour of the East had left not the slightest tinge upon his Western mind. He might never have resided east of Ramsgate. He was the straightest and most direct man, even brutally direct man, whom I have ever known. When he chose he could be diplomatic in method, and compellingly diplomatic in manner, but he would have agreed with Bismarck that if one seeks to confound an opponent utterly one always is careful to speak the truth. I have met men who asserted that Moberly Bell was a liar; with all respect I suggest that they may have been mistaken. Moberly Bell was one of those devastating truth-tellers who, for the sake of our own self-respect, persuade us that, as regards ourselves at any rate, he must have been a liar. If I wanted a man to flatter me by softening down my own faults and weaknesses I should not go to the like of Moberly Bell. But if in my youth I had wanted a man with whom to go shooting tigers in the jungle afoot, Moberly Bell would have been my partner all the time, though he was lame of one foot and hobbled painfully on the other.

He suffered the accident which shortened one leg, and left him with a permanent rigid ankle, in the Egyptian War of the early 'eighties. He was the Correspondent of *The Times*, and one evening, when running across the rails to catch a troop train, his left foot was caught in the railway points and twisted right round. In the operation which followed it was held necessary to remove the *astragalus*, the bone which, together with the leg bones, forms the hinge of the ankle joint. With a touch of that sardonic humour which was characteristic of him, Moberly Bell rescued his *astragalus* from the surgeons, and had it mounted as the handle of a walking-stick. 'I will make my *astragalus* work for me somehow,' said he, grimly. He walked with the long swift stride of a man who had delighted in walking in his youth, and the huge weight of his body thrown upon his one sound foot made a sore torture of it. His feet, always too small for the weight which they were required to carry, gave out when one had become permanently stiff and the other was called upon to do a double-shift of work. The want of sufficient bodily exercise which his lameness compelled had its consequences in impaired health. His body, big and strong though it looked, was far less strong than the ardent spirit which it housed. Many a time when I have watched him closely I have felt that he

would not make old bones, yet it came to me with the shock of an epoch abruptly ended when, far off in Glasgow, I learned of his sudden death in his office chair at the age of sixty-four.

In this book I am drawing the portraits of men as men, in their strength and in their weakness. I am writing not as an 'Official Biographer' but as a novelist, who for once is writing the truth as he saw it and not fiction as he may have imagined it. I am now drawing Moberly Bell as I am sure he would have loved to be drawn. 'Paint me, Kitchin,' I can hear him say, with Cromwell of old, 'paint me with my warts.' I have indicated that there was a whole world of newspaper administration, and of newspaper work, which he had never explored and showed no curiosity to explore. But if any reader should draw the conclusion that Moberly Bell's recall from Egypt early in 1890—upon the death of J. C. Macdonald—was not a very happy thought indeed of Mr. Arthur Walter, he would be totally and utterly mistaken. I do not suppose that any man of a courage less superb would have dared to tackle the job which was laid before Moberly Bell. I am quite sure that no other man, who did not combine Bell's boundless resource with Bell's dauntless courage, could have kept *The Times* alive during eighteen perilous years. There was, indeed, a certain advantage—strange as it may seem—in Moberly Bell's technical ignorance of newspaper administration. For had he realised, as fully as a technical man would quickly have done, what an intractable proposition he was up against, even Moberly Bell's high courage might have failed him.

From the first day that he sat down in that Manager's room, with its open door at the top of those wooden stairs, his labours resembled nothing so much as the fabled labours of Sisyphus. *The Times*, as a newspaper, was sliding steadily and remorselessly down the steep hill of bankruptcy. What Bell did, with infinite financial resource and no less infinite patience—for all the native impetuosity of his temper—was to shove *The Times* up a little way, feel it slide down upon him, then to shove it up again a little space and again to feel it slide down, and so on and so on during eighteen endless years. When the struggle for money with which to carry on at last ended, and Lord Northcliffe poured into his hands the working capital of which *The Times* in its necessity had been starved, Moberly Bell pranced upon his lame feet like some Sindbad from whose aching shoulders the Old Man of the Sea had at length been thrown down. He sloughed years off his age,

and I think that 1908, the year of deliverance, despite all its ominous suggestions of future peril to *The Times* traditions of impartiality and accuracy in news, was the happiest year of Moberly Bell's life. I can find it in my heart now to feel some regret that Moberly Bell was not fated to die in 1908 while the laurel leaves were fresh around his brows. For he was then at the summit of his fame as 'The Man who had Saved *The Times*.' Afterwards men began to see (as he saw himself) that he had not saved *The Times*, and all that *The Times* stood for in the life of England.

In 1890 *The Times*, as a newspaper, was facing a prospect in which few gleams of brightness could be discerned. Two tremendous financial blows had fallen upon it and left it staggering. Be it remembered that when I write of *The Times*, as a newspaper, I am referring to the private association of partners which owned the copyright of *The Times*, and owned nothing else. The ownership of the two Walters, Arthur and Godfrey, in the buildings of Printing House Square, and in the perpetual printing contract, was not directly affected by the misfortunes of *The Times*, as a newspaper, so long as it continued to be published, and so long as it earned sufficient from sales and advertisements to pay the rent and to meet the contract charges for the printing of the paper. The untroubled stability of the inherited Constitution reflected no sign of the gathering difficulties without, which ultimately threatened the whole basis of *The Times*. Yet among the essential facts which brought about the fall of the old *Times*, perhaps the most vital of all, upon the financial side of the business with which Moberly Bell had to cope as best he might, was the heavy strain upon the resources of *The Times* of the rent of the buildings, and of the recurring payments for printing the paper by obsolete and therefore expensive methods. The rent paid was moderate and fair for very fine buildings erected upon a large and admirable site. But the charges made for printing were in effect far larger than *The Times* for many years was in a position to pay. Yet it always did pay; Moberly Bell always somehow did contrive to pay. I will endeavour presently to look at this hereditary conflict between the Walter printing business and *The Times* partnership from, what I conceive to have been, the point of view of the Governing Proprietor and his half-brother. They are both dead; it is the barest justice to realize that point of view, however untoward its consequences.

The first blow which fell upon *The Times*—a blow which ought

to have served as an effective warning of the dangers inherent in the constitution, yet did not—was the distribution of the large reserve fund which had been most wisely accumulated by the third John Walter to the credit of *The Times* as a newspaper. A newspaper, however firmly it may appear to be established in public regard and support, is one of the most vulnerable of properties. A newspaper, apart from any material properties which it may possess—and *The Times* of the 'nineties possessed none—is simply the 'goodwill' in a few sheets of daily printed paper. If the public continues to buy it and to advertise in it, well and good; but the moment that the public, for whom it seeks to cater, turns aside and ceases to buy it, and to advertise in it, it is gone—it is a pricked bubble. So that the third John Walter was most wise, in the prosperous days of *The Times*, to accumulate a large reserve fund, yet most unwise in his failure to realise that an unincorporated partnership, human nature being what it is, will never consent to leave a large reserve fund in the hands of a Governing Proprietor who, whatever his share in the profits may be, has no rights or powers which can overrule those of the humblest of his fellow partners. As a limited company, with properly drawn articles of association, *The Times*, as a newspaper, could have accumulated and held a reserve fund in the hands of the elected directors. But a loose association of private partners—each one of whom had the full rights and liabilities of a partner—could always rebel against their Governing Proprietor, and claim the reserve fund as profits withheld from them as partners. And this, as Moberly Bell has told me many times, is exactly what happened. The private partners rebelled, foolishly claimed that reserve fund, appealed to the Courts, and had their short-sighted way. That reserve fund, which alone could have saved *The Times* in its coming troubles, was cut up and devoured by the partners as so much cake. Why, after that clamorous warning, the Walters did not take immediate steps to incorporate *The Times* partnership as a limited company, and so prevent a recurrence of disaster, is beyond my knowledge or imagination. I can only suppose that the newspaper remained a private partnership because it always had been a private partnership.

The second disaster was the direct consequence of the lamentable publication of the forged 'Pigott Letters' and of the costs of the Parnell Commission. No one could now calculate what *The Times* was called upon to pay in cash and in repute. It took G. E. Buckle, and his faithful assistant J. B. Capper, fully ten years of

sleepless devotion to the old traditions of impartiality and of accuracy, to restore the prestige which had been shattered as by a high explosive shell. And the costs of the Parnell Commission, one hundred and twenty-eight days of it, with its fabulously expensive Counsel—from the Attorney-General downwards—and its army of witnesses, devoured the revenues of *The Times* for years. Bell, who must have known, though he was called in as salvor after the wreck had occurred, put the costs falling upon *The Times* at a quarter of a million. This financial blizzard of the Parnell Commission fell upon the almost naked body of a newspaper which had been stripped of its warm clothing of a reserve fund. It was Moberly Bell, called in after J. C. Macdonald was dead and the third John Walter was dying, whose endless job it became to thaw the poor frozen victim into life.

Apart from the financial losses which had fallen upon it, and the heavy blow to its prestige, *The Times* as a newspaper remained a power in the life of London and of England. The circulation after the violent temporary ups and downs of the Pigott shock, steadied at a point not much below the level of the early 'eighties. The high-water mark of the sale of *The Times* was reached in the 'sixties, and the downward movement began in 1869. And how it began, after so long a period of continual expansion, is a strange story which illustrates very well what I said just now about the vulnerability of a newspaper property. It was Ireland in 1869 which began the decline of *The Times*, just as it was Ireland in 1887-89 which accelerated that decline into a fall. Until the Home Rule split in the Liberal Party of 1885, when Mr. Gladstone suffered his famous conversion, the consistent editorial policy of *The Times* had been to render a general, though critical support, to the Government of the Day—Conservative or Liberal. It was, I venture to think, a sound policy and a patriotic policy, in the best sense of that grievously ill-used word. *The Times* was—and is again now in these days of happy and most welcome restoration—too great an organ of well-informed public opinion to be harnessed to the fortunes of any one political party. In 1869 *The Times* was still the national paper of England, and it supported the Liberal Government of the day in its policy of disestablishing the Irish Church. We all now—except maybe a few ecclesiastical zealots—would approve the course then taken by the Editor and Governing Proprietor of *The Times*. But that support which was given to Mr. Gladstone's Government cost *The Times* an immediate and heavy

loss in its circulation. It was the favourite daily journal of the English country parson who, if he could not afford the whole cost of it, shared it with a parishioner. These English country parsons deserted *The Times* in droves. The figures, which I have often studied, show a big drop, then some recovery, then a settling down at a level substantially below the sales of 1868. It was some years after the abrupt falling off due to the Irish Church controversy that there began the drip, drip, drip, year after year, of old readers of *The Times* dying off and not being replaced by their successors. By the 'nineties this drip, slow though it appeared when taking one year with another, had become an occasion for most serious anxiety. That anxiety never lifted from Moberly Bell's mind. He became his own Circulation Manager and studied with unflagging energy the problem of how to bandage that unstaunched wound through which was draining away the life blood of the newspaper.

On the advertisement side *The Times* of the 'nineties was still fairly strong. Most of the 'Smalls' had been taken away by the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Morning Post* because it was nobody's business to look after them. *The Times* of the 'sixties was as closely packed with 'Smalls' as are to-day the *Daily Telegraph* or the *Glasgow Herald*. It is related—I tell it as a story without vouching for its accuracy—that in the Mid-Victorian Age *The Times* Advertisement Department used to close down for luncheon every day and that the *Daily Telegraph*—which had set up an office hard by Printing House Square—scooped up all the small advertisements brought by people who could not get past the closed doors of *The Times* office. Whatever may be the true explanation—I suspect that there are many explanations—the loss of small advertisements must have been the direct consequence of neglect, and of a 'superior' inability to be 'aware of the existence of the *Daily Telegraph*.' For a long while *The Times* refused to admit what we call 'display advertisements,' but those days of lofty exclusiveness had passed before I set foot in the Square. Moberly Bell, though he did not provide himself with a skilled Advertisement Manager—as he ought to have done—did whatever he could to encourage large advertisements of a good class, and was moderately successful. When one reflects upon his disabilities, and his lack of specialist training, he succeeded wonderfully well. He was a vast inspiring and driving force which set his subordinates working devotedly, though he himself was not very skilful at organising their lines of work. Nevertheless, but for

Moberly Bell's exodus from Egypt in 1890, I much doubt whether there would have been any Printing House Square in active operation for me to enter five or six years later.

Moberly Bell was good at figures and no mean accountant, though he went at his work in a typical English way. Most of his calculations of costs and revenue were worked out on the backs of old envelopes. He would thrust a crumpled bundle of these scribbled envelopes into my hands and immediately discourse to me upon them. I needed to have a quick eye to keep pace with him. He never would accept any figures of mine because, he said, I was a Wrangler, and no Wrangler since the Mathematical Tripos began had ever been known to add up correctly. He loved to reduce everything, revenue and expenses of all kinds, to so much per column. He would adopt handsome round figures per column 'so as to leave a margin,' and brought out results the most untrustworthy. He had the notion of a costing system yet omitted that close and accurate measurement in detail without which a costing system can be made to show anything.

And now let me try to comprehend and set forth the point of view of the two men upon whom, by their retention of the old Constitution with its duality of ownership, must always rest the major part of the responsibility for the financial troubles of the old *Times*. It is not enough merely to say that they were a pair of country gentlemen who had succeeded by inheritance to a task which was far beyond their ability to discharge. Had expert advice been called in, they must quickly have discovered that the methods of their hereditary printing business were out of date and too costly to be borne in days of severe competition. Their caseroom staff was at least a third larger than would have been required to operate a modern plant. They were both honourable men, sprung of an honourable stock; both of them regarded their connexion with *The Times* as their chief title to public honour. They were not Walters of Printing House Square—a pair of minor landowners in London—; or Walters of the Printing Business—a pair of printers—; they were Walters of *The Times*. Their reputations, and their fortunes, too, if they could only have been brought to see it, were bound up in the continued success of *The Times* as a newspaper. Why, then, were they both unable to foresee or at any rate apprehend the certain financial cropper which awaited them if *The Times*, as a newspaper, came to grief, and was ordered by the Courts to be sold? They could not have supposed that a purchaser, once the private partnership had been

dissolved, would grant to them any large compensation for the loss of an ancient printing contract.

I fancy that most human motives are fairly simple when one has to do with English gentlemen of the Sahib class. The Walters, I believe, held on to their printing contract and to its emoluments in the same spirit in which they held on to their buildings and their rent. They were manifestly entitled to a just rent upon their buildings, and they deemed themselves to be equally entitled to their long-established property in the profits of printing *The Times*. The printing business had become, in their eyes, a freehold with which the partnership owning *The Times* had nothing to do, except to pay the established price. If I am right—and I venture to think that I am—then we can understand how two men of high personal character maintained a needlessly burdensome system right down to the sale of *The Times* to the Northcliffe interests in 1908, and to the settlement which wiped their printing business off the map. When Kennedy Jones and his experts studied their printing department and its charges in 1908—and 'K. J.' was the highest authority of his day in newspaper production—the conclusion reached was that the immediate saving effected by the introduction of modern plant would make all the difference between success or failure of *The Times* as a newspaper.

There is this further consideration from the assumed point of view of the two Walters. The printing business employed a large staff of men who had grown grey in the Walter service. The introduction of linotype or monotype machines would have involved the dismissal of considerable numbers of these old servants. This is what actually happened after the Northcliffe purchase. The Walter business was a patriarchal business, and one can appreciate and admire the reluctance of its proprietors to see it destroyed and its staff thinned by wholesale dismissals. In the end a Northcliffe reconstruction was more fatal to the men than would have been an earlier Walter reconstruction.

Moberly Bell was splendidly loyal to his Governing Proprietor until Mr. Walter himself, in a moment of bewildered aberration, shattered his enduring loyalty into fragments. Bell owed no loyalty to Godfrey Walter and showed quite open distaste for him. When it came to the last great historical struggle Moberly Bell fought them both, and defeated them both, before they could arouse their minds to the realisation that the battle had even begun.

(To be continued.)

LITERARY ACROSTICS.

THE Editor of the CORNHILL MAGAZINE offers prizes to the value of at least £3 to the most successful solvers of this series of four Literary Acrostics. There will also be consolation prizes, two or more in number: the winners of these will be entitled to choose books to the value of £1 from Mr. Murray's catalogue. And, further, every month a similar prize of books will be awarded to the sender of the correct solution that is opened first.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 15.

(The Third of the Series.)

' — — —, this is he
Was great by land as thou by sea.'

1. 'High on a gallant charger
Of dark-grey hue he rode:
Over his gilded armour
A vest of purple flowed.'
2. 'Ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain — —, and judge the prize
Of wit, or arms.'
3. 'He doth this moment wish himself asleep
Among his fallen captains on yon plains.'
4. 'Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the — —.'
5. 'Waking as in sleep,
Thou art but now a lovely dream.'
6. 'Trust a cat amongst cream, but never
trust a — — on the saddle of a
good horse.'

RULES.

1. Only one answer may be sent to each light.
2. Every correct light and upright will score one point.
3. With his answer every solver must send the coupon that is printed above 'Book Notes' on a later page.

4. At the foot of his answer every solver must write his pseudonym (consisting of one word), and nothing else. His name and address should be written at the back. It is not necessary to copy the quotations or to send references; solvers who do so must not write them on the same paper as their answers.

5. Solvers who write a second letter, to correct a previous answer, must send the complete solution as they wish it, and not merely state the desired alteration.

6. Answers to Acrostic No. 15 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE, 50A Albemarle Street, London, W. 1, and must arrive not later than May 20.

ANSWER TO No. 14.

1. S	abrin	A
2. A	nge	L
3. L	oya	L
4. L	odor	E
5. Y	esterda	Y

PROEM: Henry Carey, *Sally in our Alley.*

LIGHTS:

1. Milton, *Comus*.
2. Scott, *Marmion*, vi. 30.
3. Tennyson, *The Lady of Shalott*, ii.
4. Southey, *The Cataract of Lodore*.
5. Shakespeare, *King Richard II.*, iii. 2.

Acrostic No. 13 ('Macbeth Othello'): This acrostic, in which every quotation was taken from Shakespeare, did not prove to be too easy. Three hundred and seventy-six solvers sent in their answers: 270 of them were correct, 79 were incorrect in one or more lights, 2 solutions had no pseudonym, 1 had no accompanying coupon, and as many as 24 solvers did not observe the last sentence of rule 4. The majority of those who failed came down in the third light; the fifth and seventh were solved by everybody.

The first correct answer that was opened came from 'Seg,' and she wins the monthly prize. Books from Mr. Murray's catalogue, to the value of £1, may be selected by Miss E. G. Saunders, 4, Place Vaudémont, Nancy, France.

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